

FIRST SERIES
PRICE TWO SHILLINGS

SKETCHES OF THE DAY

BY
ALBERT SMITH



SKETCHES OF THE DAY.

(FIRST SERIES.)

IN THREE PARTS.

BY

ALBERT SMITH.

PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED

BY

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SKETCHES OF THE DAY.

(FIRST SERIES.)

PART I.

THE FLIRT.

TO
HENRY COLLINGWOOD IBBETSON, ESQ.,

THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS DEDICATED,
WITH THE SINCERE REGARDS
OF HIS FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

THE FLIRT.



THE INVOCATION



ANOUS! graceful, glorious
Girls! Come on, fair
young witches, who alone
determine whether, by
your presence or absence,
the most splendid evening
party ever given shall be a brilliant *succès*
or a dismal failure. Wreath your white
arms into a magic circle round our desk,
through which for awhile no duller subject
shall dare to intrude



Crowd on, with your choicest and most charming attributes, one and all—objects of that light and joyous love which, like champagne, intoxicated only for the time, and left such little remorse behind.

Come, Annie, with the long dark hair, and darker eyes :

And Emma, with those dazzling teeth that

flashed for very whiteness between the rosy lips



And Bessy, with the silken plaits, and long cheek-sweeping lashes :

And "*Belle de Nuit*," for that is the only name we shall give you, fair creature, with those scented ringlets compromised into bands by



being looped together round the small white ear; so daring in the most rapid polka—so unequalled in the *renversé* of the *deux-temps*.

Still, come on—Fanny, with that lovely complexion, which got us into disgrace for saying we did not believe in it :

Ellen, with those polished rounded shoulders:
And Amy, with those taper fingers that were

still too small for the smallest gloves—wagered and lost—Houbigant or Huber could furnish

Appear! Alice, of the rippling chesnut tresses, that flew all over our eyes in that final “Post-horn”

Blanche, whose low tremulous contralto concentrated our entire world at the side of that cottage piano:



And Marian, with the large black pupils, in which, dilated with such depth of lustre, we saw our tiny photographic semblances, when we leant that evening over the garden parapet of the Castle at Richmond, and quoted "Locksley Hall," and you blushed in the twilight at the lines :

"Many an evening, by the waters, did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips."—

The "waters" being those of the Thames, and the "stately ships" the London steamboats, on board one of which the band was playing "Love Not," with such a warning emphasis.

And thou—most fair and daring of them all, whose name shall share the secrecy of "Son Nom" in Louisa Puget's charming ballad—who, when the heads of your family were out of town, and your cousin was staying with you, said you were going to your aunt's in Westbourne Terrace, with whom she was not on good terms, and came with us to the Lyceum, sitting well behind the muslin curtains to laugh

at *Box and Cox*—which will not be believed, we know, and if it was, would be considered disgusting by all properly-constituted minds—come thou, too, to inspire us.

They are here! The air is redolent of Patchouli and Bouquet de la Victoria. Light forms, but still mortal, with all the airiness that tarlatane can give—that attractive tarlatane which will not wash and is so soon done for, as well we know—are flitting round the room; and the rustling of their dresses as they flock about us, makes an enchanting murmur

And now—to begin.



CHAPTER I



WHICH IS CHIEFLY DEFINITIVE.

“Several young flirts about town had a design to cast us out of the fashionable world.”—ADDISON.



IT is difficult to tell at what period the word *Flirt*, in its present sense, first became established in our language.

Applying, as usual, to Doctor Johnson for intelligence on the

subject, we find the following:—

“TO FLIRT, *v. n.* To run about perpetually; to be unsteady and fluttering.

“FLIRT, *n. s.* A pert young hussey

“FLIRTATION. A quick sprightly motion. A cant term amongst women.”

These definitions are anything but satisfactory. Dr. Johnson evidently knew nothing at all about the matter. We do not expect he ever flirted: we feel convinced that had he tried to do so, he would have said something so dreadfully harsh and crushing, that the fair butterfly would soon have been broken on the wheel by his coarse savage blows.

In later times the ingenious Maunder—whose *Treasury of Knowledge* would be such a good book if its marginal proverbs did not constantly compel you to keep turning it in all directions to read them—is no more explicit. He still sticks to “A pert hussey,” omitting the “young;” and, further on, defines “Hussey” to be a “worthless woman.” Half a century has not sufficed to clear Mr. Maunder’s notions on the subject. He has only flirted with the Muses.

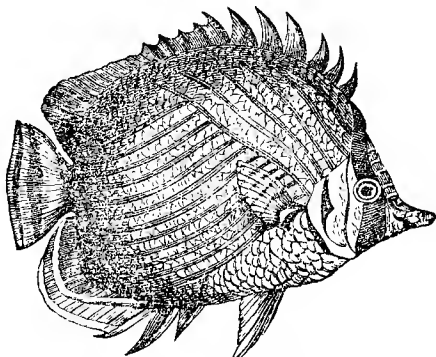
Lastly, the *Penny Cyclopædia* blinks the

word altogether, which is a great pity, since some nice illustrative wood-cuts would have been a great relief. You can perceive how much more attractive this would have been of



[*Puella excellens*, or Charming Girl,]

with an account of the habits and instincts, favourite localities, varieties, and subgenera; than this of the



[*Chaetodon vagabundus*.]

Sect. *Acanthopterygii*. Family, *Squamipennes*.

So we are driven to give our own definition; and this we do after the most approved zoological system, as follows:—

<i>Class</i> ,	Fair Sex.
<i>Order</i> ,	Nice Girl.
<i>Species</i> ,	Valseuse.
<i>Genus</i> ,	Flirt.

CHAPTER II.



THE ORIGIN OF THE FLIRT.

"I was merry, I was merry,
When my little lovers came."



IT is Twelfth Night; or any other evening in the Christmas holidays appropriated to festivity that you please to fix upon; and a party of little people are collected together. There is negus for them—very weak, but very delicious—and pieces of cake so large that the old caution of taking care of their toes would not be so much out of place.

And in the midst of the table is a beautiful Christmas tree, glittering with bonbons, small toys, and twinkling lights, at which all the little eyes are gazing, almost with wonder, as they never before imagined that such beautiful things grew, unconnected with fairy tales.



At the end of the table a tiny flirtation has been going on all supper-time, between a little elfin lady of five years old, and a young gentleman who has not yet exchanged his tunic for a jacket. He holds her baby hand in his, and looks terrible things at Master Howard, who sits on the other side and will keep putting his arm round her neck and kissing her, which is a shocking thing to do at any time of life—in company. Then the first pulls the little *belle* closer to him, and says that she shall be *his* wife; and did not an elder sister set them all to rights, the consequences would be dreadful.

For Master Howard is a bad boy, and the terror of the square within the rails. He can pinch with singular sharpness, and makes predatory excursions amongst the other childrens' nine-pins and pewter Life-guards. And at parties like the present, he has been known to beat the more submissive guests with their

own dolls, even to tears ; or knock them, with the gay *brioche*, off from the sofa, converted for the time into a coach, drawn by two arm-chairs and a music-stool, unicorn.

When Master Howard is quieted, the two others get together closer than ever, and the little girl perhaps says "I love you," with a sincerity and disinterested fervour that only belongs to that age. And then they have some little joke between them, not known to anybody else, but of such subtle excellence, that it is only sufficient for them to look at one another to burst out into the merriest and most musical laughter.

The attachment is no affair of secrecy. He won't dance with anybody else ; and when they play at *Family coach*—and she is "Aunt Jemima," and he is "the little dog," and that singular accumulation of misfortune begins which characterizes the luckless journey in that ill-fated vehicle—whatever may be the confusion and



changes of seats, for forfeits, they are always next to one another.

Next morning they meet in the enclosure. She expects him, and she wears her little short dress and *visite*—so well *bouffé* that they form a constant “cheese” about her—with an additional air, when she sees him coming. And then—little puss!—she pretends to pass him, as she

hides her face with her lilliputian parasol, only to turn back and laugh.

Before long, perchance, the families are no longer neighbours. The boy goes from his tutor to Eton; from Eton, possibly, to Cambridge, or the Coldstream Guards. The girl grows up, comes out, and changes to a Flirt.

And when they meet, in after times, neither recollects the other, so many loves have since affected them.



CHAPTER III.



OF THE FLIRT AT AN EVENING PARTY.

"A thousand hearts beat happily ; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell."



POSSIBLY, the Flirt appears in her chief phase and her greatest brilliancy at an evening party. We will then proceed to describe her there.

She comes somewhat late—as the nicest persons always do—and, as she passes up the room, with the glow of conscious beauty on her cheek, giving the

lie to her eyes so meekly downcast, is said by the girls "to think a great deal of herself," and by the young men leaning against the door to be "something nice." If they are a little fast, they proclaim her "a stunner;" but this is observed in a low tone, because it is a reckless phrase, verging on the improper.

She refuses the first invitation to dance, because she is not sure of the cavalier presented



to her, wishing to see first what he can accomplish in the *deux-temps* before she commits her waltzing reputation to him. Or possibly she is under a promise, for the first waltz, to young Langford Miles of the Treasury, whom she strongly suspects of having sent her the

anonymous bouquet, in the morning ; or her brother's leading friend, "Charley Lincoln" of the Blues—and neither have yet arrived.

She is greatly admired by a blushing young man with no whiskers, a white neckcloth, and shoes, who stands by the door. Being introduced for the quadrille, she hears him say something about "first set," which she does not exactly comprehend, only knowing one ; and subsequently finding that he is vague with respect to a *vis-à-vis*, and that in the last figure he goes off in the "promenade" *l'été*, she takes no more notice of him. So that when the poor young man has asked her "Which opera she thinks will do best this season?" he has not the courage to propound another question, but feels very small.

The quadrille finished, the Flirt will not take any refreshment, but sits down at once by her chaperon, rather cross ; until she sees "Charley Lincoln" through the muslin of the

front drawing-room doorway as he comes up stairs ; and then her eyes sparkle once more.

The waltz begins, and the favoured cavalier edges his way along the room, with well-assumed unconcern, towards her. There is no need of



an introduction ; before eight more bars are over they are up together, and having quietly and politely, but with great determination, knocked a few lumbering old *trois temps* out of the circle—men who keep their partners at



arm's length, and girls who turn their heads first over one shoulder and then over the other as they waltz—they go off and ahead, and soon clear their own way.

Our Flirt likes waltzing with Lincoln for many reasons. She admires his moustachios and lovely shirt-fronts ; and above all, he waltzes so beautifully himself—she cannot put him out of step—and holds one so tight !

The waltz concludes, and the Flirt this time will go down for refreshment. And then her reappearance in the ball-room does not take place for a long time. Once away, they take pos-



session of a *causeuse*—one of those comical double chairs, which, although turned different ways, always bring the people on them face to face—and then she keeps talking to young Lincoln, leaning back, and pulling the petals from her



bouquet with an intensity as if her whole existence was brought down to a point in that meeting.

And so it is. We never will have the Flirt called heartless. Her heart is as much concerned in her flirtations, whilst they are being carried on, as that of the most “amiable” young lady. But the devotion is transient—

the flame kindled by thus stirring up the heart is like that produced by poking a fire; very vivid whilst it lasts, but soon over—which we take to be a great advantage on either side; inasmuch as you experience all the *agrémens* of occupying the thoughts of a pretty girl without being asked your intentions after a day or two, or in any way caught into the somewhat solemn happiness of feeling that you are “engaged.”

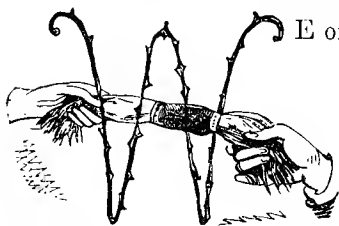


CHAPTER IV



OF THE FLIRT AS CONNECTED WITH CRACKER BONBONS.

What cracker is this same that deafs our ears?"—*King John*.



HE once took some little pains to show those who delighted in parties, what twaddle emanated from an

establishment devoted to sugar confectionary, and known as the "*Fidèle Bergère*," in the Rue des Lombards, in Paris, having for its avowed object the diffusion of pleasantry and light love-making.

Everybody knows those kisses, burnt almonds, and sugar-plums, in their envelopes of gaudy paper, with the concealed Waterloo cracker inside, which it is so common to explode at supper time ; and everybody also knows that the motto, which this discharge of tiny artillery sets free, bearing the date of the establishment above-mentioned, is generally the most stupid, unmeaning thing it is possible to conceive.

Sometimes it is a small French sermon upon "Sensibility," or other lively subject ; sometimes a slow definition of a word, or a poor imitation of Rochefoucault—all tending to damp the spirits and promote melancholy. If the lines be in English, they are about as entertaining as those subjoined, which have been really selected from a quantity :—

"Beauty always fades away,
Virtue will for ever stay."

Or,

"The best affections of my heart are thine,
If you to my petition will incline."

Or,

"What is beauty but a bait,
Oft repented when too late?"

Seeing how silly these ideas were, we suggested the following, which at least had the merit of inducing thinking, and by their matter-of-fact truth tended to do away with a great deal of the false atmosphere with which society is invested.

Here was the Reflective :—

When the master and mistress smile through the night,
Oh! do not believe that their bosoms are light.
Think of the plate they have had to borrow,
And the state that the house will be in to-morrow!

The Cautious :—

Though after a Polka with somebody nice,
You get sentimental whilst down stairs for ice
Before you attempt her affections to win
First try and discover the state of the tin.

The Probable :—

Oh! had we but a little isle,
On which the sun might always smile,
There to reside alone with thee—
How tired out we soon should be !

The Admonitory :—

Recollect a bad Polkiste don't get much renown.
If you can't dance it well, you had better sit down.

The Moral :—

Love 's a trifle, fleeting soon,
Vows are the froth, and man the spoon.

The Economical :—

If the night 's not very dry,
Find out those who 've got a fly,
Whose way home your own one suits,
Because wet walking ruins boots.

The Prudent :—

He whose gloves are new and white,
Can clean them for another night ;
But he who wears them parties twain,
Can never have them cleaned again.

These, however, by the way ; they are meant
for society generally. But for the Flirt another

kind is still required ; a little verse that might express in an instant all that eyes had been trying to do for the entire evening ; a pretty line or two from contemporary love-poets ; a little less of the conventional Valentine school of writing. With such much might be done to aid philandering, for the motto would be eagerly looked forward to.

At present the cracker bonbons are emblems of marriage rather than love. Hands are joined and the match severs the union. A common-place lecture tumbles out, enveloping a solitary kiss, which possibly after all, being tasted, is found to contain nothing but aniseed.

The Flirt loves the bonbons nevertheless ; and you may be certain, upon hearing the first snap, that she is the culprit. You never find her, however, at the table. She is always at the side or in a corner of the room, appropriating the edge of the side-board, a few inches of the mantel-piece, or a shelf of the Canter-

bury to herself. Or she may be buried once more in the only arm-chair left in the room, because it was so big that there was nowhere to put it had it been taken out.

But you can always find her by the first cracker bonbon, accompanied by her light musical laughter. And then the snap and the laughter is followed up, and presently all is joyous noise and revelry. For your pretty Flirt is the best charm against gloom at an evening party that can be found. Her spirits and beauty will float half-a-dozen dull and uninteresting girls with them, who would otherwise sink into perfect uselessness. And wherever she is, the supper is never solemn, which in her absence it is apt to become—a dismal meal whereat nothing is heard but the knives and forks; and any one who pulled a cracker would be frightened to death at his or her rashness, the instant they heard the report and perceived the dead silence it induced.

After the Flirt has fired the first shot the revolution commences, and the reports become general. The *épergnes* are stormed for fresh arms; barricades of gilt paper are thrown up; and the bonbons are compelled to abdicate somewhat suddenly, whilst a republic of merri-ment is established, and many engagements take place—but only for the next Polka. And then the Flirt begins to read very steadily the last motto that her partner has given her, which goes as follows:—

“ Que ne ferais-je pas pour obtenir de vous,
Jeune amie, un aveu, qui courannat ma flamme ?
Laissez agir mes feux, qu'ils passent dans votre ame,
Et vous éprouverez les plaisirs les plus doux.”

Having read which she laughs, and squeezes in her eyes and looks wicked, and puts it into her glove, and then she ruthlessly despoils several bonbons, examining their mottoes, and throwing

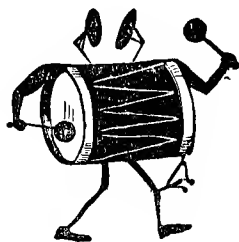
them away, until, until she finds an old favourite, and gives it to him. He reads.—

“Ni le lieu par sa distance,
Ni le temps par sa longueur,
N'auraient jamais la puissance,
De vous éloigner de mon cœur.”

And then they begin to talk to one another so earnestly, that some of the guests say, in reply to observations, “Oh! that’s an old affair between Margaret Howard and young Lincoln:” and others, less charitable, with plain families, “would be sorry to see *their* daughters make themselves so conspicuous.”

Whereas, in point of conspicuousness, the Flirt and her favourite are the least open to the charge of any in the room. And, indeed, so wrapped up are they in themselves, that it is until some little time after the last crinoline is compressed, through the young men waiting to come in, in the door-way, she perceives she is the last lady left in the room; and that the

rest are already dancing a quadrille by themselves up stairs to the universal band of the orchestrina, which, with all the stops out, must be the instrument upon which Verdi the Violent composes his operas.



CHAPTER V.



OF THE OLGA WALTZ IN ITS RELATION TO FLIRTING.

“To one and all, the lovely stranger came,
And every ball-room echoes with her name.”

BYRON.



IN the commencement of a winter afternoon, we would have you picture the library of a fine old country-house. The windows overlook a river, which is swollen and turbid, making level the weir and the back-water, and gurgling

about the trunks of the skeleton trees that dart up from the leaden-coloured stream, now deep over the islets on which they grow. Guns are frequently heard, ringing in the high woods about the house, and dying in long reverberating echoes along the vale of the river; and a party of ladies are seen, through the bare shrubs of the copse, going to meet the shooters.

Nobody is at home but two individuals, in the old library. One, a lady, young and pretty, is turning over some French songs, and trying them vaguely. The other, a gentleman, thinks he is listening to them, as he never moves his eyes from her face.

Some of the songs are very pretty. There is "*Mire dans mes yeux les yeux*," and "*Toi*," and "*Je t'aime parce que je t'aime*," "*Je crois en toi*," "*Ce n'est pas ta dot*" and many others.

At last they came to "*La Folle*." Possibly you do not know that touching song. It is supposed to be sung by some poor girl who has

gone mad from love. She met the faithless one at a ball, and she is continually murmuring the tune of the Valse, during which the burning words that caused her misery were whispered in her ear. The air of the Valse is introduced all through the song, breaking in upon the accompaniment, even to the end, where, after the delirious burst of excitement in which she sings :

“ Que j’aime le plaisir, la parure et la danse;”

she falters at once to the wailing confession,

“ Que je souffre, O mon Dieu ! rien qu’en pensant à *lui* !”

The song is sung by the young lady, who is an adept in flirting, with all the effect that a mezzo-soprano voice—low and trembling—can give to it. And then they both think of the waltz they had last night, when the large room was lighted up and the neighbouring families made up such a good party—and recal what passed

between them during it : and recollect that the waltz was "The Olga."

Unconsciously the pretty girl follows out the train of thought with her fingers, and commences playing the air.

"Did it never strike you what a pretty ballad the Olga would make, played slowly?" she asks.

"Never until now," replies her companion.

"It would be quite an English *La Folle*," she goes on ; "only the girl need not be mad—broken-hearted, and that sort of thing ; nothing more."

And then after much labour, and pursuit of rhymes under difficulty, the following words to the air of the Queen of all waltzes, are pencilled out on the back of a piece of music.

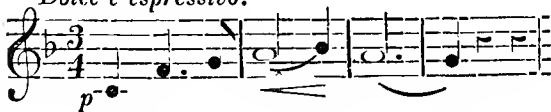


SOUVENIR D'UN BAL.

BALLAD, written to "The Olga."

[The air is here printed by the kind permission of M. Jullien. It is in the published key, and will not be found suitable for the voice ; but the smallest knowledge of music will suffice for its arrangement.]

Dolce e espressivo.



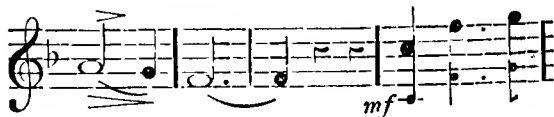
Why on my ear thus fal ling,



E ve ry sense en thral ling,



Thoughts of old times re cal ling, Come those for



got ten chords?

E-choes of



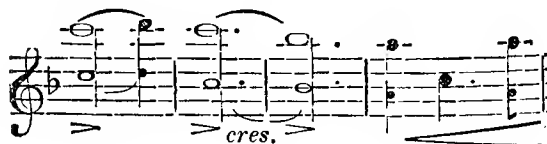
vows once spo ken,

Whis-per'd and



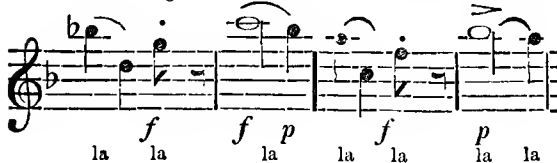
sworn, and bro ken,

Leaving no



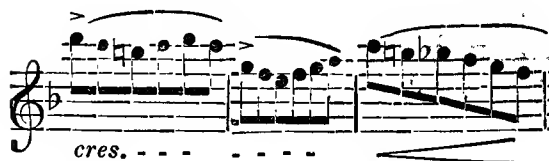
o ther to ken

Of their too



a la Cabaletta.





II.

Hope in its bright times shaded,
Life in its spring-tide faded,
Even the past upbraided,
Through that entrancing hour !
Why will such rays of gladness
End but in gloom and sadness,
Driving the thoughts to madness,
By their too fatal power ?
La la la, &c.

At night, the Flirt tries this, and it goes off with great effect—so great indeed that she finds she has one more powerful charm at her disposal, to attract the butterfly young men about the light of her presence. And the song getting about and being copied, is circulated and sung. And then, in consequence, during The Olga, everybody feels bound to flirt as much as they can—a duty to which some strange utterly inexplicable property in the tune always impels one.

So you will see that whenever that waltz is struck up, there is more excitement manifested than at any other dance of the evening.

CHAPTER VI.



OF THE CHATELAINE, THE CORAL CHARMS, AND THE PIANO, AS AIDS TO FLIRTATION.

"Beauty and use can so well agree together, that of all the trinkets wherewith they are attired, there is not one but serves to some necessary purpose."—SIDNEY.



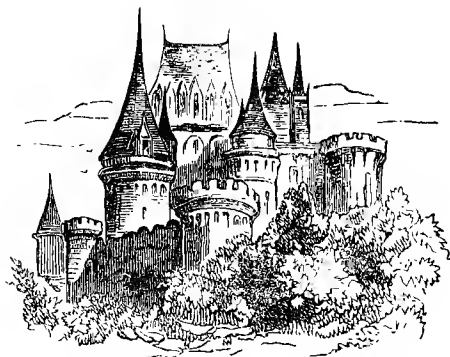
IN those dismal affairs, known at certain dreamy theatres as "fine old standard comedies," which harmless—nay, even good and amiable—people, who have done nothing wrong, are often savagely com-

pelled to sit out, the character of an old housekeeper, or farmer's wife, is sometimes to be met with, perpetually jingling a bunch of keys at her side. Ten to one, were research extended, there would be found in her pocket a small rolled-up museum of needles, silk, shirt buttons and bodkins known as the domestic housewife—the “hussiff” of the vulgar tongue. And, moreover, might be produced a scent-bottle, with a battered screw silver top; a pincushion; a nutmeg grater, and, perchance, a piece of old iron.

All these things resulted from the confusion of the tribes of utilities, which the *Châtelaine* of the middle ages patronized. She herself was the *moyen age* for “housewife:” and the keys, the scent-box, the grater, the pincushion, and the bit of horse-shoe, once hung from the article named after her, at her side.

The *Châtelaine* had long been forgotten. Those who went to Paris, and whom good-for-

tune led into the still and time-honoured—almost sacred—old rooms of the Hotel de Cluny, in the Rue des Mathurins, perchance saw one, amidst the interesting memorials of former times which M. du Sommerard had there col-



lected and displayed ; and which brought back the old homes of the middle ages so vividly, where the Châtelaine once filled the post of hostess. But the rage for the old, and the long-passed-by, burst forth : and Wardour Street rose. Heavy scraps of dingy point lace, and dimmed

and rust-speckled armour—blackened carvings, and dusky painted glass—huge brazen dishes, curious goblets, and cumbersome weapons, acquired a strange value, and with them the Châtelaines also reappeared, and came into favour; first in their pristine forms of quaint old gilt tablets linked together, in company with the dependent articles before spoken of;



and next, lightly forged and imitated in sparkling steel chains, with everything annexed that could be thought of for a want.

The Châtelaine no longer hung at the side of age and garrulous decrepitude. Young hearts throbbed against it, making the lights flash from its polished facets at every pulsation: or, at times, the breath of low soft words, whispered

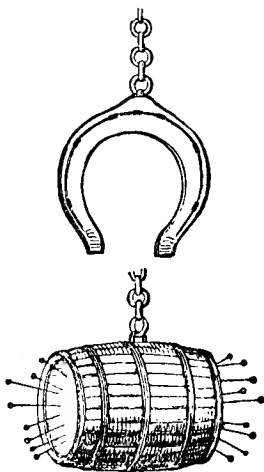
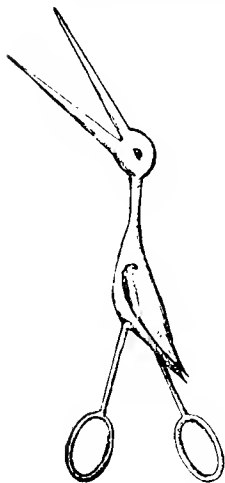
over it, and full of meaning, dulled its lustre. Elsewise, too, the language, instead of coming from withered lips, was spoken by floating youthful eyes.

Then it was that all sorts of things were attached to the Châtelaino that could furnish subject-matter to talk about. And then, the Flirt found out how charming it was in an old country house—in the embayed window of the hall by day, when the men who liked to struggle through long brambles for six hours, had gone shooting: or the most unobtrusive corner of the darkening drawing-room, by twilight, when they had all come back again, tired—how charming it was to go over the Châtelaine piece by piece, and talk about each one. There was such room for so much about anything—for you might hang anything to it, from a lucky sixpence to a *lorgnette*, if you chose.

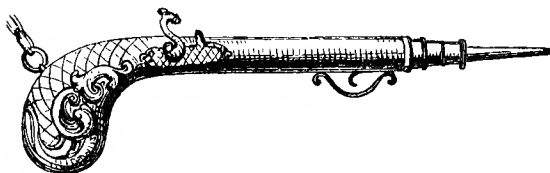
There might be a vinaigrette, a desk-key, and a tiny watch, no bigger than a shilling:



A pair of scissors like a bird :

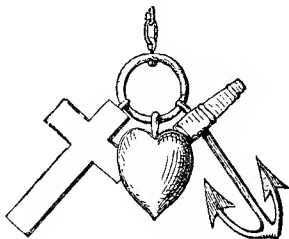


A horse-shoe against witchcraft; a barrel pincushion, and a pistol pencil :



Or, haply, a thimble-case, made like a wise owl, in silver, with enamel eyes :

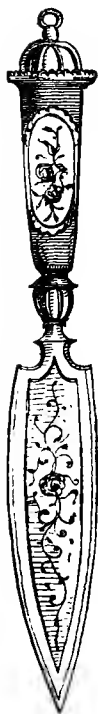
And possibly a heart, a cross, and an an-



chor, typifying Faith, Hope, and Charity :

Or a paper-cutter.

And then, on a ring all to themselves, came little Neapolitan coral charms; comprising, first and foremost,



The remedy against an evil eye.
And then a boot, a mouse, and
a Punch's head in a slipper:

Together with other anomalies.

But all these things did to talk
about, especially the locket, of which nothing



could be learnt beyond what a sigh told. And then the young lady found out that the young gentleman also had a locket, hanging from his watch-guard, like this ;

but about it she could learn nothing, for he would not tell.

What the conversation over the *Châtelaine* was about, would be very stupid upon paper, if reported literally. But the following attempt may, in a measure, embody its tendency ; albeit we have small pretensions to poetry.

THE CHATELAINE.

On the Oriel's old recesses
Floods of light fall, many-hued,
Streaming through those silken tresses,
With their golden rays imbued.
Twinkling leaves, to mullions clinging,
Quiver on each tinted pane,
Shadows in the noon-tide flinging
On your *Châtelaine*.

Charms of other climes and ages
Still possessing unknown powers ;
Fairy knife to cut the pages
That shall wile the summer hours ;
Locket quaint, or by-gone token,
Hanging by a golden chain,
With the old coin, bent or broken,
From your Châtelaine.

Smallest things may bear a moral,
If we read the sense aright ;
E'en that tiny hand of coral,
Charm against an evil blight,
Points this lesson with its finger—
Hearts from malice must refrain,
Baneful thoughts should never linger
Near your Châtelaine.

Cover'd with enamel flowers
That small watch, without compeer,
Shows how pass the summer hours
On their flight, when you are near.
Tiny chronicler of pleasure,
Unalloyed by slightest pain,
Bringing Time to such small measure,
Near your Châtelaine.

Etui chased with olden stories,
Made domestic things to hold,
Shows some former housewives' glories,
Gleaming through the latticed gold,

Linking with the past, the present—
Could they but return again,
They would gaze, with wonder pleasant,
On your Châtelaine.

They have been as long forgotten
As the work they did achieve,
And the tapestry is rotten
Which their fingers once did weave.
Yet these means of their creating
Tremble with fresh life again,
With your heart's own beat vibrating
From your Châtelaine.

Poetry, if the foregoing can be called such, and music go together; and this brings us to the grand Asylum for Distressed Flirts—who are hunted about by watchful eyes—the Piano.

The Piano Flirt must be a good musician; for this reason—if she is not, she will play “nonsense music” all the time she is talking; or, in giving up too much of her attention to the notes, her conversation will be feeble and unconnected. And this is more palpable if she is playing a quadrille. All amateur dance-

music is atrociously uncomfortable; but more than ordinarily so when the young lady who is performing is carrying on a piano-side flirtation



with the young cavalier who won't dance with anybody else, for then she plays on, long after the figure has finished, in spite of all the efforts of the active gentleman in the wig, who keeps

clapping his hands and saying, "Thank you, Miss Beaumont, that is all." But at last, being made to understand that another tune is required, she simply begs their pardon, and turns over to the *finale* of "The Chatsworth."

In the above case the music is properly set down, and all goes on tolerably well. But if the young lady is merely indulging in a desultory performance, scrambling over the opening bars of various airs as they strike her, not playing to anybody in particular—only one or two friends dispersed about the room reading or doing *crochet*, whilst the favoured one is "turning over the leaves" for her—the style of accompanied recitative that goes on is as subjoined.

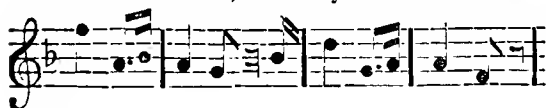
It will be seen that it is in the manner of Antigone's bewailing—that is to say, speaking to music; which is usually considered a most difficult task, inasmuch as the eminent Mr. Macready would not risk it, even at the Queen's

desire. And it will also be seen that continuity is quite set at defiance, and the tunes end abruptly, as leaves are rapidly turned over; and that there is no counting, nor indeed any time at all kept.

To enter into the spirit of the following, it is essential that it should be played. As all young ladies are capable of doing so, it is not necessary to say any more to them; but if, gentle reader, you are of the other sex, ask some fair creature to play it for you. Sisters are to be avoided, if anything, except indeed the sister be some one's else.



You must come to the Richmond ball. I shall make
mamma send the voucher, and then you will have no excuse



Oh! I dare say, you are engaged—of course. To
your *Weippert's*, or some other of your favourite haunts.



What a shame it is that you men can enjoy yourselves so. I wish I was not a girl—to go about too.



Turn over; that is it. Look at mamma. I wish she would not always have the Masons here. They are so very formal



I declare they quite freeze one; and Jane thinks polking improper. The other night I don't think she danced above twice



for we only had two quadrilles all the evening; it was so good! Mind, I shall keep the first *deux-temps* for you on the 9th



So don't come in at half-past twelve, and say you could not get away before. I suppose, if Lilly Thornton is there, we



shall—turn over—shall see you at ten. Yes, I know; of course not; now there is no occasion to tell such dreadful stories



Look at that old Anne Mason. Isn't she horrible? I do hate her so, I can't tell you! I hope you admire the worsted cap.



She went and said you had been smoking, when you came to the Kendall's. I said I knew it, and I rather liked it.



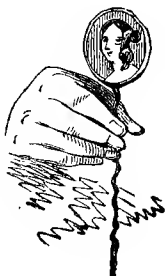
See what hattles I am obliged—turn over—to fight for you. The handkerchief is nearly finished; you shall have it to-morrow.



Oh! my goodness; what am I playing? And they are all looking. You had better sing something. But recollect—the 9th.

And when all this has been played over two or three dozen times with different words, the chances are that an elderly voice will say—

“ My love, are you aware what time it is?”



CHAPTER VII.



OF THE GARRISON OR MILITARY FLIRT

"How nobly he becomes the great battalion!
See how he shines in arms, and suns the field."

DEYDEN.



IN a fine afternoon the band is playing the most charming tunes, as the company surround it on the gravel walk, or clipped velvet sward. It may be at Hampton Court; or Kensington Gardens; or on the Terrace at



Windsor Castle. But wherever it is, there you will be sure to find Harriet, and Florence, and Alicia Flower. You may go even to Winchester, Hounslow, Woolwich, Coventry, or Brighton, but there they will still be. There is not an officer in the two battalions of the Grenadiers, Coldstream, or Scots Fusileers—nay, in the Life Guards or Blues, and so on to the Light Dragoons of the Seventeenth, who does not know the “Flower girls,” as they are collectively termed—who has not danced with them, walked with them, flirted with them, and ridden with them—in fact, done almost everything but proposed to them.

The father of the Flowers was an officer, and they have a brother in something at Ceylon, so they know a little of military life. But beyond this, they have the army-list by heart, and never make a mistake in calling “*Lieut.-cols.*” “Captain,” or “*Lieuts. and Capts.*” “Mr.”

They prefer the mildest ensigns and most downless cornets to civilians ; and, indeed, believe in nothing but officers. They are in their glory at the Woolwich ball, which they would not miss upon any account ; and have not yet recovered not having been at the Aliwal ball at Brighton.

Par parenthèse—an inclination of this kind is not to be wondered at. Despite the endeavours of certain funny writers and humorous artists to drop military men to something akin to the ridiculous, it requires but a small tour in society to see how immeasurably superior they are to the “ruck” of young men one encounters. Constantly mixing in the best circles, and distinguished by that easy courtesy which can be thus alone acquired ; floating carelessly on the sunniest surface of the stream of life ; agreeably educated, and, for the most part, endowed with that manly and thorough-bred *physique* which is the undisputed attribute of

“good blood;” it is no wonder that they are dangerous rivals. It is a great thing to be one of “nature’s nobility,” we know; but they have not got everything to themselves yet—at least in England: since many young officers could challenge the same number of nature’s peerage at anything they pleased, and beat them by chalks as long as the entire range of cliffs from Folkestone to the Reculvers. And coming from a scion of the most common-place, confused, and unsatisfactory stock in the world, the opinion may be at least taken as a candid one.

But we are ungallantly forgetting Harriet, Florence, and Alicia Flower all this time. They are famous flirts, and precisely those species of girls known by the general attribute of “capital.” They are good musicians, elegant dancers, passable artists, clever talkers, dress to perfection; and are most useful in getting up *tableaux*, having stood for the



Graces, or something of the kind, in classical dresses, until the *pose* is as well known as the *Ariadne* or *Eve*. And they may be termed, in a degree, the band-mistresses of the regiment; for they indirectly bespeak the tunes.

Harriet is thoughtful and romantic, and by her wish expressed to Captain Belton, as he leans against the fighting gladiator on the Eastern Terrace, the selection from the melody teeming *Sonnambula* is performed. Florence



is decidedly military, and dotes on the march from *Nabuco*—which not being performed at Exeter Hall, was obliged to be called *Nino* here—nodding her head at the part.



and so on ; whilst Alicia, who is always engaged twelve dances deep everywhere, could listen to the





polka for ever ; so that is *her* choice.

The battalion goes away—another comes, and then another ; but still the “ Flower girls ” are the reigning *belles*. Admitting they live at Windsor—and here let it be distinctly and *earnestly* understood that we are making no personal sketches, which charge might be brought against us by thus fixing on a locality ; but it is the best for our purpose—the same walks take place under the Gothic foliage at the side of the Long Walk ; the same loiterings on the Terrace ; the same parties at Cliefden—of which anon ; and then this battalion is replaced by another, and all the programme of philandering is enacted over again.

And at last comes the terrible fact, that these nice girls never marry. So much with agreeable officers, they cannot put up with

ordinary cavaliers ; and officers, however agreeable, are not always marrying men—perhaps that is the secret. As one of the “Tenth” is reported once to have observed, upon an introduction to a young lady, “He was not much given to matrimony himself, but he would mention her at the mess with the greatest pleasure,” so think they. And even if a pure-minded Ensign does get up something like a



sincere attachment for the garrison-beauties, he is safe to be laughed out of it as soon as it is known.

"Why, dear old boy," they say, "you can't be thinking of Alicia Flower! Ho! ho! ho!"

And then the mess is convulsed with laughter at the bare idea.

"Aston was spooney in that quarter five years ago," says one.

"And it was never clearly made out why Graham did not marry her," adds another.

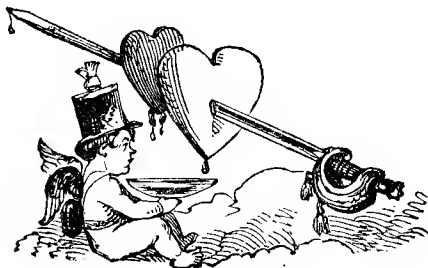
"I think he behaved damned badly," puts in a third.

"Not if you knew all," says the next.

And then the Ensign is told by the Colonel to ring the bell for some more claret, which stops this, to him, most unpleasant conversation.

The result of all this, and similar *badinage*, is, that fresh battalions still come and go, and talk over the young ladies, and still the "Flower girls" remain "as they were."

Except, possibly, the youngest, who may profit by the example of her sisters during a season in London. So that when her heart whispers to her, "Rear rank take close order—march!" she obeys the command, packs up her things, and goes off accordingly.



CHAPTER VIII.



OF THE FLIRT AT A PIC-NIC.

"Summer woods about them blowing—
Made a murmur in the land."

TENNYSON.



E spoke just now
of Cliefden. Per-
chance you may
know where it is ;
if you do not,
when the summer
arrives go down
on the Great

Western line to the Maidenhead station, and
ask at the Orkney Arms for the route to "The
Springs." If it is possible that you have
never been there, you will thank us at least for

making you the gainer of something from this little book, if the rest fail to amuse you.

As there may be some lovers of high art amongst our readers, who only understand description in blank verse, for their benefit we will try and tell them what this lovely spot is like, in their own fashion :

“A thick-leav'd hanging wood ; the sunlight's gleam
Can scarcely quiver on the turf below ;
The lowest branches kiss some rippling wave,
And with their blossoms spangle the blue tide.
Long climbing avenues of scented firs,
And cedars, dark even at blazing noon,
And tortuous walks, 'midst gnarled writhing bolls,
That need each fibre of their twisted roots
To hold them to the slope. A cold stream flows
Of crystal waters, welling to a pool,
Over smooth pebbles—mottled, blue, and white—
To join the river. In the summer-tide,
The fair expanse of river and broad lands
Which glitter in the afternoon's bright sun,
Is fair to gaze upon. Then shall you hear
Light laughter, and stray chords of music float
Through all the woods ; and own so fair a spot
Was never elsewhere fashioned.”

But as this is the sort of stuff that any one can

write by the mile, we will drop it. Only we have a strange notion that if any eminent tragedian was to introduce this, with appropriate emphasis, into a heavy play, people would be found to applaud it, and the *Examiner* newspaper to praise it.

But please to understand that "The Springs" at Cliefden is made for a flirting pic-nic. For there is a famous little pavilion to dine in; and some lovely turf to loiter upon; and, what is especially charming, artful walks by which you can get away from everybody; and boats lying off the bank, upon the Thames, conducive to the same happy opportunity. So that it may be imagined there is scarcely a fine day throughout the early autumn that the spot is deserted.

The day usually commences in a little temper on the part of the Flirt, who wants to go from Windsor with Archy Warren on his dog-cart, and her little brother Jack, who is at



Eton, for a chaperon. Jack always looks another way when he is ordered, and never tells anything. But her parents not seeing the excursion in that light, although Warren's sister, even, is of the party, think she had better go

with them; and she has nearly consented—with a very ill grace though—when the wretched Jack lets out about a six-oar going up with the Lambtons, and Mainwarings, and Frank Halli-ford of the Guards, who plays the *cornet* almost as well as Kœnig, and has got lungs stout enough to work the Apollonicon if needed, and that he—Jack—is to steer. Knowing the Lambtons, and Mainwarings, and Frank Halli-ford very well, she is sure that she will also be asked, and therefore is irresolute respecting the domestic britska. But the parents are unyielding, and her doom is sealed, with only one alleviation. As Jack is going in the boat, George Howard has his place on the box, because the greyhound, Cosmo, has the front seat, and George Howard does not bore one quite so much on the box. He is all very well, but “slow;” follows a subject of conversation tolerably, but never originates one; ties his handkerchief twice round his neck, and



will wear frilled shirts; and—type of every gentle dulness—plays the flute, which he takes to Cliefden with him, in case there is a wish for “a little music.” But he is better than nothing,

and being one of those distressing people who always look pleased at everything, finds favour with the parents, as an amiable young man; and so, at last, the Flirt thinks she may put them all in high humour by patronizing him. He begs a flower for his coat, and she gives him a bit of scarlet geranium. And when she tells all the especial ones about this afterwards, and they know what it means, what a laugh, at George Howard's expense, there is! But he, good creature, wears the sprig proudly, and tells everybody quietly, "that Marian Ford gave it to him."

There is never much done before dinner at Cliefden that the Flirt cares about. The party is large, and all the people do not know one another; so they stare, and keep to their own sets. Archy Warren arrives, and, to Marian's extreme disgust, who is waiting for the boat, does not fly to her at once, but takes off Frank Halliford, as soon as he comes up by



water, with him, having all sorts of things to tell, in which some "little party" figures conspicuously. And these two sit on the branch of a tree that overhangs the river, hidden by the leaves, and smoking cigars, with a bottle of pale ale which they have made Jack steal from

the spring, wherein the liquids are cooling, dangling in the water by a bit of string.

Marian watches them, and, by a triumph of human chess-playing, contrives that Warren shall take her in to dinner. She does not, however, forget Frank—for the great attribute of the true Flirt is that she can keep two or three young men in her chains at once—but smiles so graciously at him every now and then, that at last he is perfectly happy in the idea that she is bored by being next to Warren, and would give much to be near himself

They are joyous dinners in that large summer-house at Cliefden, if you collect the right set of people, who don't mind being crowded, or using the same plate for pigeon-pie and lobster-salad. The champagne-cork pops louder and takes a longer leap in the hilarity, and the million bubbles of the sparkling wine jump from their invisible source at the bottom of the glass to kiss the ruby lips that press the rim



more eagerly than in an orderly room. Laughter is more ringing, and conversation faster ; and there is the prospect after dinner, not of the confined drawing-room to withdraw to, but the glittering river and the blue sky ; the thick-leaved woods, the mossy turf, and the log hermitage.

There is a talk of going on the water when dinner is over. Long before the mass have arranged how they shall divide, a pair of sculls are seen dipping gently from the sides of a foreshortened skiff up the river towards Cook-

ham Lock, until they come into the shade of a goodly chesnut; and then, as the little boy at the stern holds on by a branch, music begins; and the blighted heart of Frank Halliford assures him that it is the Flirt and Warren, with her brother as "gooseberry picker,"—for so, by some Flirts that we know, is a useful third called. And Warren, who also plays very well, has had the unparalleled audacity to borrow Frank's cornet!

He is right. Under the tree the sculls are shipped, and the cornet produced from its box; when, after blowing through the mouthpiece and working the valves, and pulling out the slides, and then turning the cornet over and over, and finally trying something to himself, bending his head down very low,—after all this, which it would appear is proper to be always done, Warren begins to play the *finale* to *Lucia di Lammermoor*. And then—as the glassy water, disturbed only by dimpling eddies, or



the leap of a glistening fish who finds even the stream too tepid for his comfort—the hanging woods glowing in the afternoon sun, and the touching “*Tu che a Dio spiegasti l’ali*” floating in the deep still air—form a day-dream of entrancing loveliness ; they think that only their

two selves are in the world. And they really *do* think this—Jack is forgotten altogether; and the feeling with which they notice the other boats when they come up alongside, and the inmates of course say with a giggle, “Don’t let us disturb you, pray—you look very comfortable” —the bores!—is similar to that of awaking from a pleasant dream of being with somebody you are very fond of, to see nothing but your servant brutally pulling up the blinds to let in the cold daylight, as he insists upon the hour being half-past eight. The flirtation is thus broken up—for the time; and then a community of boats is established.

But by the time they get back again the ruddy autumnal twilight is creeping on: lights twinkle in the summer-house, and the *chalet* beyond it; and the tea is being got ready. The company still prefer being *al fresco*, and the sward is covered with ladies and gentlemen. And then the Flirt commences to make a *house*.

CHAPTER IX.

~~~~~  
OF "MAKING A HOUSE."

"It was the cooling hour, just when the rounded  
Red sun sinks down behind the azure hill."

BYRON.



THE process of *making a house* is one at which the Flirt is a great proficient; either at an evening party, or in a country mansion, or a pic-nic, or in fact anywhere where people are collected together, and charitably permitted to do as they like. It is accomplished as follows.

Society comprises four sets of people—1st, the Entertainers; 2nd, the Listeners; 3rd, the Bores; and 4th, the Blankets. By the Entertainers we do not mean "funny" people



who say "good things" constantly, never let a voice be heard but their own, play small practical or implied jokes, and would dance a hornpipe on the table or stand upon their head on a music-stool, if they thought it would get a laugh—such belong to Class 3—but well-informed persons *au courant* with all the lighter topics of the day, and more or less available in any diversion that may be proposed. The mission of the Listeners is to look pleasant, and appreciate. The Bores have been already depicted by a clever contemporary: and the Blankets are those dreary people who, however entertaining the matter may be that is before them, always preserve a fixed face of solemn aspect; and if they speak, usually say something *mal-à-propos*.

If the Flirt is not entirely taken up in philandering with "the object" for the time being, she, of course, is included in the first set; and as soon as circumstances admit, she "makes a house" as follows.

She carelessly, and with a plan entirely

imperceptible, places one or two chairs in tolerable approximation. One of these she occupies; and when she thinks that "the object" is looking at her, she assumes a most charming



expression of pensive melancholy—a look of deserted blighted sadness that attracts him at

once to her side. Then all her melancholy vanishes forthwith, and as the guests move about, she beckons another "capital" girl, and says aloud, "I want to speak to you, Ammie; just for two seconds;" and adds in a lower tone when she comes, "Take this chair, and we will get John Maynard and his brother."

Still the company have no idea of what is going on. The Flirt's favourite beckons the other young men quietly, and says, "Keep about here, but don't sit down till we are all sure of our set;" and then they would like Laura Eversly, but that slow younger Horton is with her, and he will not do at all. Just then, to their horror, an innocent man—whose name, although he has been some time in the house, nobody ever thinks of asking—sinks down in one of the chairs! This will never do: he must be politely got rid of. So the party already collected preserve a dead silence, until the intruder, who is right in the centre,

gets uncomfortable, and edges off sideways, like a crab; upon which the Flirt directly places her bouquet on the chair, only removing it, as a hint, for some one nice to occupy the place.

And so the house is *made*. The chairs come closer together and the feet approximate, as if they were going to play a game at "Hunt the Slipper" sitting down; and then the great fun that goes on, with the famous anecdotes and *plaisanteries*, cannot be described. But it lasts until the mistress of the house, being a strong-minded lady, comes up and says—perceiving the effect it is having upon the others—"Come, come, this will not do. I cannot have all of you in a *coterie*;" at which the house breaks up with sorrow and subdued murmurs.

But should the hostess lack nerve to do this, then the sitting is prolonged for a period that would almost be the death of Mr. Brotherton.

In like manner, the house is ~~made~~ on the

lawn at Cliefden, where, all this time, we have left our company. It is so very warm that the Flirt has taken off her bonnet, and having found some wild hops, has twisted a branch into a wreath, and put it on her head, giving her the appearance of a *Reine Bacchante*—only in appearance, mind. And then, recollecting the guitar was put in the britska, Jack is sent after it; and he returns treating it as though it were a banjo, and speaking in the received dialect of Ethiopia, for which he is reprimanded.

Then comes the song, when a seat has been made for the Flirt, on a pile of boat-cushions. It is very dangerous, with respect to the hearts about her, as well it may be. For at that period they are melting, whilst wishes are waking, on poetical authority; and the still twilight, that makes eyes so large, and voices so doubly musical, influences the thoughts of everybody. Frank is very far gone indeed; and never thought so seriously about proposing

in his life. But what a fortunate thing to-morrow is, under such circumstances !

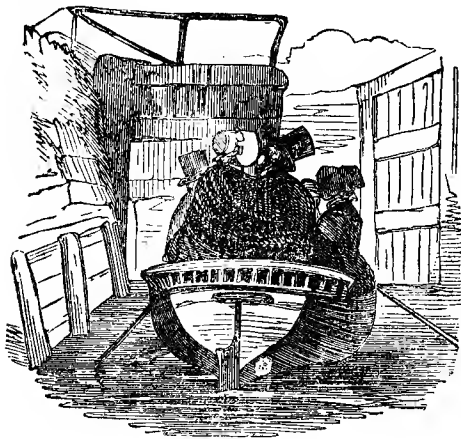
At last the party breaks up, and the beating of the boats begins ; that is to say, all the girls want to go home by water, and none of the parents, again, see the necessity.

But the Flirt triumphs. The nicest lady of the party—just emerging from the yea-nay-ishness of the bride into the agreeable young married woman—says she must come ; and of course Warren is in the boat. But now he does not row ; he sits amongst the ladies, to play the cornet, as he says, and gives his oar to Jack, whose hands are like an armadillo's back. The whole crew is, indeed, disorganized ; and how they get through Cliefden and Boveney Locks is marvellous.

But, somehow or another, they contrive it safely, to the air of "*Come é gentil*," and finally arrive home about two hours after the carriages : during which time the respective parents have declared a hundred times "they never would

consent to anything of the kind again, as nothing compensated for the anxiety;" and have almost determined upon starting with lanterns along the towing path from the Brocas, to look after them.

The Flirt, however, gets home at last, and catches no cold, Warren's cloak having, in the most delightful manner, sheltered two figures instead of one, all the latter and darker part of the journey.



## CHAPTER X.



### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

"Not purple violets in the early spring  
Such graceful sweets, such tender beauties bring.  
The orient blush, that does their cheeks adorn,  
Makes coral pale, and vies with rosy morn."

LEE.



**T**HE Flirt at the Opera inclines to the pit tier: and talks about "that love Mario" over the edge of the box, to the tall handsome acquaintance, whom she introduces to her mamma. And she always thinks she

sees Edward Hamilton in the stalls.





She has a singular knack of driving young men twelve in hand; keeping them all together, as Mr. Hughes does his horses.

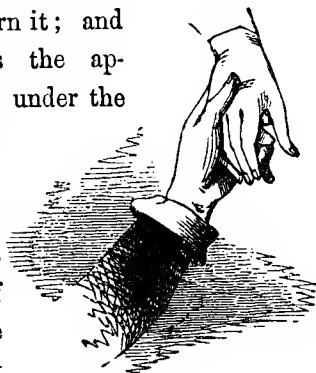
She causes a Maelstrom in society, in



whose eddy all are irresistibly attracted towards the centre, which is herself.

She is very nice.

She allows you to press her hand, and has been known to return it; and sometimes permits the approximation of feet under the dinner-table—which is very delightful, especially when you are assured that it is not the castor of the leg you have been making silent love to, for the last quarter of an hour



She has ever conceived quadrilles to be stupid things, preferring one Polka to half-a-dozen of them, and a *deux-temps* to either. But a Post-horn will shake her allegiance to all.

She bets gloves at the races, and if she loses is a defaulter. But she subsequently



arranges matters by working picturesque initials on a handkerchief, or a sovereign purse in crimson silk with steel beads.



She is very clever with a fan.

She is skilled in saying with great coolness "No—I think it was the next;" when the slower of her admirers asks if it is not the dance he is engaged to her for.

She does not object to walk out at the seaside in a high wind; and may, with some little trouble, be persuaded to join a donkey party, to lunch from shrimps, at Pegwell Bay.

She loves Alboni better than Jenny Lind, because of her dash and spirit; and because she hears the great contralto called "a glorious fellow."



She can talk with her fingers; and in extreme cases, has been



known to make telegraphic signs from the open window, to the young gentleman that her family do not approve of, in the wish to discover whether he is going to a certain party.

With cautious pressing she will own that she really did once peep into Byron: but has only heard of Paul de

Kock from her brothers, as being highly improper.

She is very great on board a yacth, or yacht, or however it is spelt, for we never clearly knew; and thereon abiding has been known with the greatest persuasion to smoke a cigarette:



the which is followed by evil consequences.

On being provoked thereunto, she will try to whistle.



At school she is the great counsellor of all the mischief: and for this reason is much esteemed by her companions.

~~~~~  
L' ENVOI.

IF our sketches have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended—

We have loiter'd here awhile
Only to provoke a smile,
From a gay and graceful theme,
Light and passing as a dream—
Causing no more lingering hurt
Than the bright eyes of the Flirt.

Gentles, take it not amiss
If we give advice like this—
Let the Flirt none reprehend,
Nor importune her to mend,
Never chide her, cross, nor doubt her—
What would parties be without her?



SKETCHES OF THE DAY.

(FIRST SERIES.)

PART II.

EVENING PARTIES.

THE NATURAL HISTORY
OF
EVENING PARTIES.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH THE AUTHOR INVOKES CERTAIN
ASSISTANCE.



WALTZES,
whist, wax-
candles and waistcoats !
Chandeliers, and cham-
pagne ! *Croquets*, creams,
cornets - à - piston, and
cracker bon-bons ! Flirts,
flounces, and flowers !
— Pumps, Polkas, and
Ponche à la Romaine !
A *melée* of delicious and
captivating images crowds

upon us at once, and involves our ideas in a mass of inextricable confusion for our commencement.

Twinkling-footed Terpsichore!—Gentle goddess whose bright showers—oh, no! that's another—gentle goddess of pumps and pirouettes! lady patroness of coquettes and confectioners! a bewildered author implores thee to inspire him, by the transfer of a small portion of liveliness from thy own heels to his head. By the charming attributes of thy most favoured votaries;—by Caroline Rosati's daring bounds, and Lucile Grahn's sylphlike figure; by Flora Fabbri's ruby lips, Fanny Cerito's alabaster shoulders, and Carlotta Grisi's lovely legs; by the Gitana, Cracovienne, Cachoucha, Lithuanienne, and Truandaise, descend! Descend, we beseech thee, and mesmerise our brain with some of the active magnetic influence that pervades thy thrilling and vibrating organization!

Coy creature! dost thou require further invocation? Thou shalt have it. By Jullien, once so great upon the piccolo; and by Laurent, whose rattling band lifts us off our legs; by the Eclipse Polka and Post-Horn gallop; by Barnard, whom we hold to be the greatest *pianiste* that ever lived,

and Macfarlane, whom a cotillon of an hour and a half does not tire ; by Adams, Weippert, Tinney, Moss, Oakey, Willecox, and the indefatigable Charles Blagrove, he once more implores your assistance.



We have waited for five minutes in an agony of expectation, and we are not sensible of any unusual inspiration. No dense clouds of aromatic vapour, rolling in delicious and enervating volumes, have filled the room ; neither has the carpet opened, the walls divided, nor the ceiling vanished, in allowing any lovely spirit, whose silk fleshings move in pliant grace beneath the transparent

undulations of her book-muslin tunic, to visit our mundane, or rather our aërial apartment. We perceive that we are, as usual, left to our own resources ; with the reflection on the chilling truth, that virtuous woodcutters and youngest princes are the only persons who, upon nursery authority, appear to have ever received morning calls or mental assistance from the feminine children of the air.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE PROPER PERIOD FOR EVENING PARTIES.

IN spite of the versifications of an old English poet named Thomson,—an almost extinct author, who once perpetrated a book about the four quarters,—the society of London allows but one season in the course of the solar year. This may be said to commence properly with spring radishes and Grisi, and conclude at an indefinite period varying according to the extent of incomes, the success of philanderings, the approach of grouse shooting, and the continental or marine migration of the connexions you most look up to ; everybody knows a set of comparatively great people, whose habits they are most studious to imitate. The choregraphic ingress, to speak astronomically, begins with the dingy foliage of the Parks, and terminates with

the arrival of oysters: after which the dance hastens to quit town. Quadrilles depart to renovate their enfeebled figures at the leading watering-places; waltzes embark on board the *Batavier* for Baden-Baden; cornets-à-piston incline to provincial concerts, for change of air and the benefit of their lungs; and harps evince extreme affection for Gravesend and Richmond steamboats.

It cannot be altogether the philanthropic wish of making their guests partake of small doses of the poetry of existence, from ten o'clock at night until three in the morning, that induces people to invite them, or they would choose some more congenial time. At this period of the year, the weather is in a glorious state of uncertainty; and young men, who do not like trudging to parties along a muddy *trottoir* in thin-soled patent boots—who revolt at the association of white kids and an omnibus, are compelled to take cabs, which collectively keep up a becoming and consequential clatter in the street all the evening (for a Hansom makes as much noise as a private one, and perhaps more, and in the dark, produces quite as good an effect.) The drawing-room windows can also be opened, that the coachmen and lantern-bearers-in-



waiting may participate in the harmony of the band, or watch the shadows of the waltzers as they twirl across the blinds, should they be down, and the adjacent inhabitants be impressed with a due idea of the party-givers' importance; whilst the

rapid approach of daybreak affords the best hint of the flight of time, and drives the most inveterate dancer to tender his adieus to the hostess, who has been dying to go to bed for the last two hours, in an agony of suspense lest the camphine lamp in the china-closet, which by a process of unparalleled mechanical extension has been converted into a card-room, should begin to smell, and shower down blacks.

CHAPTER III.

OF ARRANGING THE LISTS OF GUESTS.

No sooner is the evening determined upon—no sooner are the purchases completed of no-coloured sealing-wax, and tinted, or creamed, or satined (as the case may be) note-paper and envelopes, than the first note of preparation is sounded, which heralds in the approaching confusion, in forming the list of guests, and arguing who can be genteelly left out, in case you are overdone.

It is evening: Mamma and her two daughters are seated at the table arranging the names of the visitors upon the back of an old letter, having turned out the dusty records of the card-basket before them, in order that no one of importance may be forgotten.

Ellen. I am sure I don't see why we should invite the Harveys, mamma. They have been here twice, and never asked us back again.

Fanny. And we shall see those dreadful silver poplins again : they must be intimately acquainted with the cane-work of all the rout-seats in London.

E. And William Harvey is so exceedingly disagreeable. He always looks at the cipher on the plate to see if it is borrowed or not.



F. And Mrs. Harvey thinks the *deux temps* 'improper'—the old thing !—and 'don't approve' of polking as all the best circles do it.

E. And, last year, William declared the pineapple ice was full of little square pieces of raw potato ; and when Mr. Edwards broke a tumbler at supper, he told him “not to mind, for they were only tenpence a-piece in Tottenham Court Road.” The low wretch thought he had made a capital joke !

M. Well, my dears, I think your papa will be annoyed if they are left out : but never mind, then—we won’t ask them. Now, here’s **Mr.** Deucere.



E. Oh ! he must come : he's one of those men you meet so many of in Regent Street, but so few at evening parties. I hope he has not yet shaved off his mustachios—they are so very effective in a room !

F. Dear man ! I wish he would not wear those odious white neck-cloths. He looks so much better in a black one.

E. I rather like them.

F. My dear Nelly !—they look just like the young men in the linen-drapers' shops with the



large windows; and Tom says he always thinks the people have invited the waiters of the places where he goes to sup after the play, when he don't come home until three in the morning. They are so very unbecoming!

M. Now, come, my dears—we are not getting on with the list. Have you put down Mr. Deucere?

E. Yes, mamma.

M. Very well. Now, let us see—here's Mr. and Mrs. Howard: of course they will come, with the four girls.

E. All dressed alike, and standing up in every quadrille. I declare I will get George Conway to put an ice in Harriet's chair, for her to sit down upon, in revenge for her waltzing last year, when she brushed down the Joan of Arc and knocked off its head.

F. It's quite awful to see the dead set the Howard girls make at Mrs. John Robinson, and she never invites them.

M. Here is Mr. Frank Maynard: put his name down.

E. And, of course, Maria Pierson's next to it: he never left her side all the evening last year. I wonder if that will ever be a match—what a

long time it has been dawdling on. There—I've written it: now, who is next?

M. Mrs. Lindsey: what a pity it is that some one does not tell the poor woman to have a new set of cards! Did you ever see such a vulgar affair?

F. Never mind—she gives capital parties. What very good connexions queer, odd-looking people often scrape together! and they have always got the money.

E. We must tell Tom not to overdo us so much with his own friends. I declare, last year I did not know half the young men in the room: it was so very awkward when you had to introduce them.

F. And two really smelt of smoke so horribly, that—oh! I can't tell you how bad it was!

E. And they were not nice persons. Two of them were in the pit at the Lyceum the next night, and seeing us in Mr. Arnold's box, would stare us out of countenance. With a single glass, too!

M. Mr. Butler has called here very often. I think we ought to ask him.



F. Does he waltz?

E. No: he says his head won't allow it.

F. Ah! that means he can't; we can do without him. He is always shuffling about in the hall, cramming his clogs into the pockets of his rough coat, or stuffing his comforter into his hat, or something equally fidgety.

E. Say, you understood he was down in the country, mamma, or you would have been delighted

to have seen him. And besides, he is so fat. Whenever he calls, I always tremble for our slight drawing-room chairs.



And in this style is the list arranged, the hostess gradually becoming a prey to isinglass and acute mental inquietude, which gradually increases as the day draws nearer, until upon the morning of its arrival, her very brain is almost turned into blancmange from the intensity of her anxiety.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE PREPARATIONS.



WITH the first blush of the dawn, the whole establishment is assisting in that process known familiarly as one of turning the house out of window; and a perpetual parcels deli-

very at the street-door keeps the bells and the servants on the vibration the whole morning.

All the superfluous articles of furniture belonging to the lower part of the mansion boldly invade the bed-rooms, and finally carry them by storm ;



strange chandeliers attach themselves to the hooks of the drawing-room ceiling ; regiments of candlesticks, in all the brilliancy of recent plate-leathering,

and new wax ornaments, appear in review upon the sideboard, before a staff of Camphine table-lamps and pint decanters; whilst an accompanying sham fight appears continually going on between the fire-irons, druggets, broom-handles, and stair-carpet all over the house, until the master of the establishment rushes wildly out for the day, finding in the course of this domestic pantomime, which to him is anything but a comic one, that his own bed-chamber has changed into a supper-room. The drawers turned hind-side before, and covered with oil-cloth, look like decapitated chiffoniers; the four-poster and wash-stand have evaporated altogether; in fact, not one trace is left by which the apartment can be recognised, except the little red cord attached to the bell-pull, which originally came through a slit in the tester, and now obstinately asserts its right of occupation.

Barely has a little comparative order been established, when the arrival of the rout-seats and French rolls commences a fresh series of confusion, which rapidly accumulates. The key of the china-closet was never yet known to be found when wanted; consequently, it cannot be opened: and, on the other hand, the door of the

room where the supper is already lying in state cannot be shut. This casualty much delights the olive-branches of the family—if any there be—who, left entirely alone, and quite overlooked in this general *mêlée*, divert themselves by poking their little pudgy fingers into the creams, and scooping out the insides of divers patties with a doll's leg, until rather inclining to their quarters, they migrate thereto for the day, with all their toys. This accounts for the occasional apparition of a small soldier, or an inhabitant of Noah's Ark, quivering on the top of a mould of jelly wherein it has been stuck.

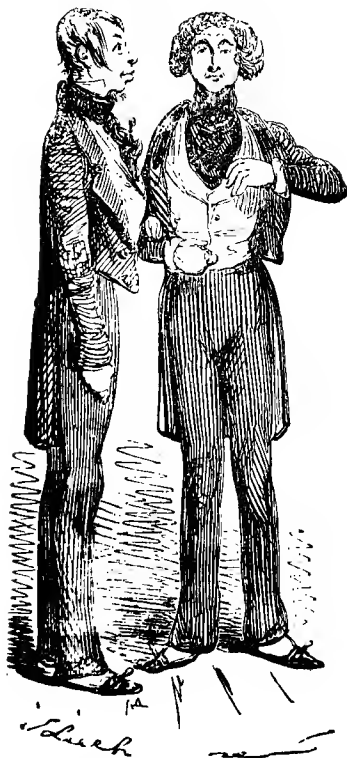
By the afternoon, the *bouleversement* of the ill-fated mansion has reached its highest point; almost participating in the appearance which a furnished baby-house would present after being rolled down stairs from the nursery to the drawing-room. We do not exactly know in what state the kitchen remains, for we have never yet been bold enough to venture down to its Acherontic precincts; but, from certain vague glimpses occasionally obtained through the medium of the area windows, we imagine it must offer an aspect of wild confusion. Of course, on a day like this,

nobody thinks about dinner; or, if they dare to do so, nobody gets any—unless it be the odd-shaped trimmings of sippet-like sandwiches, any pastry that may be over-baked or slightly scorched, the rebellious blanchmange which refuses to turn out properly, the legs of lobsters, or an ingeniously-contrived and extempore *vol-au-vent* of all these things put together.

Toward evening, everything is pronounced to be properly in, or rather out of, its place; and the family contrive, by dint of extreme perseverance, to get a cup of tea in the still room. But the vexations are not yet concluded. Various little notes arrive, which do anything but put the hostess in a good humour. First of all, somebody,



whom she particularly wished to be present—in fact, for whom the party was almost given—sends a melancholy statement of the very acute stage of influenza under which they are labouring, “which they extremely regret will prevent them from accepting,” &c. Then Miss M—— or N—— (as the case may be), one of the intended *belles* of the evening, who flirts, sings, polks, and waltzes, is obliged to go suddenly into the country on a visit to an old aunt; but her two brothers—tall, gangling, awkward young men, who wear pumps and long black stocks, and throw their leg about, when they are dancing, everywhere but over their shoulders, and whom you were compelled to invite with their sister, although you would never have dreamt of them otherwise—are invariably most happy to come—quite delighted—and you are overdone with men already. And lastly, when it has become really a matter of serious consideration where you can stow all your guests without making your rooms resemble the hold of a slave-ship too closely, four or five of the least intimate write off to inform you that they intend taking the liberty of bringing some young friends with them, who are staying in their house—*i. e.* for about ten minutes



before they start off for yours. And it is a most melancholy truth, which may be taken as a general rule, that ordinary, uninteresting persons always

jump at your invitation (when you yourself are merely concerned about the attractive girls and presentable young men, who will look effective in your rooms) with the certainty and velocity of bleak at a piece of greaves when you are fishing for roach alone.

At length, all the preparations are completed, and temporary quiet reigns through the house; but it is like the lull of the elements after a boisterous day in March, before it begins to rain. The last ring has brought the last parcel to the door, which of course ought to have arrived first in the morning; the small children have been rapidly undressed and put to bed, with the wild notion that they will stay there, and not walk calmly down stairs some three or four hours afterwards in their night-gowns, with their little naked white *tootsy-pootsies* (the nursery *patois* for tiny feet) pattering on the cold floor-cloth; the governesses, in families where they are not going to give a party, have marched all their young ladies, hoops and *la grace* sticks, out of the squares, and are thinking about changing their collars for dinner; the last views have dissolved—the last diver has gone down, and the last Royal George blown up

at the Polytechnic Institution; the West-end idlers have disappeared; and the last clang of the milkpails has echoed down the areas; in fact, to the majority of the world the labours of the day have concluded, excepting policemen, actors, waiters, medical men, and people who give parties. The last crawl up stairs to dress, in whatever part of the house their toilet appointments have been transported to, in an extreme state of exhaustion; and, perfectly ready to go to bed, commence preparations for receiving two hundred guests, and looking to their individual comforts, until a period of the ensuing morning when early risers are thinking about getting up.

CHAPTER V.

OF COMMENCING THE FESTIVITIES.



T is during this short interregnum that we may expect the arrival of the green - grocer, who is to assist in waiting. He keeps a shop at the corner of the next street — exhibits five perpetual eggs in a worsted moss basket, to

intimate that he sells new-laid ones—starts covered

vans to Hampton Court and Epsom Races—provides “bands” for quadrille parties—wears white cotton gloves with very long fingers; and was never known to announce a name correctly; so that what between a real servant-boy—we beg his pardon, the *page*—of the establishment, and himself, the astonished visitor is ushered into the room under any other appellation than his own.

Next comes the young gentleman in lay down collars and a jacket, who returned an answer of acceptance to his invitation the very evening on which he received it; and taking the time stated in the note as really meant, arrives about half an hour before the candles are lighted, and amuses himself in the dark for that period by enjoying the pleasures of anticipation, and wishing he had a needle and thread to mend one of his eighteen-penny gloves, which has burst at the seam all round the ball of his thumb. And this brings us, by concatenation, to another melancholy fact—that whenever you are going to a *réunion* where you wish your hands to look particularly white and delicate, they obstinately persist in assuming the appearance of an uncooked steak.

The young gentleman is followed by the useful

friend of the family—an universally-known sort of creation—half lady half person—who knows instinctively where the keys are always kept, and where everything is placed, from the lump sugar to the champagne; and who has been requested by the hostess to come early and see about the tea and coffee. This attention distinguishes her from other guests, who, when the mistress of the house “begs they will not be late,” conceive from this that they are of importance, and evince the same by dropping in about a quarter to twelve.

And finally, before the grand attack upon the street door commences, the music arrives—sometimes in the shape of a single pianist of untiring fingers and unelosing eyes—sometimes as a harp, piano, and cornet, who are immediately installed in a corner of the room with two chairs, a music-stool, and a bottle of Marsala.

Nine o’clock strikes as the last *arcana* of the toilet are completed, and mamma and the daughters descend to the drawing-room to superintend the final arrangements before the guests arrive. At this precise period the eldest son of the family, who was requested to be dressed and have his room all tidy by the appointed time, throws the



whole household into hysterics, by giving a thundering knock at the door before any of the candles are lighted, as he comes home in an extremity of haste, but withal, exceedingly jolly, from dining with some men in chambers, “with not the least idea that it was so late.”

Every bachelor knows that the operation which women term “putting his room to rights,” implies hiding all his things with the keenest in-

genuity, so that they can never be found by any means short of a divining-rod. This is the case at present, and fresh confusion is created by the young gentleman's unceasing applications for



clean towels, warm water, other boots, his governor's razors, and somebody to rout out the rings

and buttons of his white waistcoat : together with various assertions over the stairs, that he can neither find his gloves, studs, nor pocket-handkerchiefs; and to add to the general trouble, his voice is heard from his room, exclaiming, “ Mary, here’s the old story,—no button to the collar of my shirt!” In the midst of all this, one of the daughters, who has been peeping through the blinds, announces that a carriage stops at the door; upon which news the brother is left to shift for himself, and the servants fly down the stairs as if they were fire-escapes or Russian mountains.

Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat! *bang!!* BANG!!! BANG!!!! goes the knocker, with a force which makes the hearts of the inmates jump into their throats, and almost tempts them to believe that there is a concerted design upon the street-door. Mamma takes her post of reception at the door: one daughter gives a lightning glance round the room to see that everything is in its place, and flings behind the sofa a very good imitation of a duster, which one of the servants has left behind; and the other having burnt her fingers, and smoked her gloves in the futile attempt to kindle

the stubborn wick of an impossible lamp with German china transparencies, throws the lighted *cibucetto* upon the carpet, and rushes to her mother's side, with the alacrity of a stage peasant not in his place when the bell rings for the curtain to rise.

It is an awful minute of suspense whilst the first-comers are taking coffee in the study, or back parlour, or library, or whatever name the small room overlooking the leads is known by; and the expression — "I wonder who it is!" escapes simultaneously from the lips of the mother, the daughters, and the useful friend. At length, the hot coffee being swallowed, as if it was a necessary and high moral duty so to do, (and enjoyed about as much as if it were taken at the Wolverton station,) and the shawls being entrusted to the housemaid, who appears, for that night only, as a female pawnbroker of private life, issuing duplicates, and receiving interest, the visitors are announced.

"Mr. and Miss Chamberlayne!" screams the page at the foot of the stairs, in a voice that varies in the most extraordinary style from a deep bass to a falsetto.

"Mr. and Miss Chimlyn!" exclaims the green-grocer, on the first landing.

"Mr. and Mrs. Chilblain!" vociferates the



footman at the drawing-room door, and the couple enter the room.

There is a welcome and a salutation—an expression of poignant sorrow at being informed that Mrs. Chamberlayne has the influenza, and is

compelled to remain at home ; and then, as nobody else arrives for a quarter of an hour, that period is passed in conversation of the most brilliant and exciting kind. Miss Chamberlayne admires some Chinese feather screens, which she has seen fifty times before, hazarding, at the same time, some faint meteorological remarks, and inquiring of the young ladies of the house " what new music they have got," and " if they have been out to-day ;" whilst Mr. Chamberlayne instinctively holds his hands to the fireplace, which is filled with silver paper water-lilies, and real evergreens.

Imperceptibly the guests arrive, and the conversation rises to a slight buzz as the hostess vandykes about from one party to the other, putting questions to all, without waiting for the answers ; or if she does, allowing them to perform the anatomically-impossible journey through her brain of " in at one ear and out at the other." And with all their intended civility, these would-be attentive queries are sometimes exceedingly awkward ; more particularly if you ask after dead people, matches that are quite off, or relations

who have not been heard of "since they were engaged in that unpleasant affair."

It has frequently struck us when the lady or the house has been sailing about the room in all the pride of her ball costume, what a very different appearance she presented some six or eight hours previously, when she donned a pair of old kid gloves to dust the alabaster gimcracks, and China teacups on the chiffonier, for fear the servant should break them. And yet this is but life in its simplest and most natural antithesis. The glove that has pressed the hand of some lovely girl descends from the ball-room to the boxes of the theatre, thence to the litter-drawer of your dressing-table, amongst faded flowers, old straps, empty Circassian cream-pots, broken brace-ends, worn-out razors, and pieces of playbills; and, finally, the housemaid wears it to black the stoves in: the dress-coat gradually comes into the office, and then to the cad who hangs about your chambers; or, by reversing the scale, the ball *bouquet* of flowers, which some drunken old basket-woman has carried about upon her head through half the gin-shops in London, whilst waiting for

“the market,” rises to such value, that you would not exchange a single flower, presented to you by its lovely owner, for all the choicest plants in the Pantheon Conservatory or Covent Garden.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FIRST QUADRILLE,
IN WHICH THE ORIGINAL MR. LEDBURY IS IN-
TRODUCED TO HIS PARTNER AND THE LITERARY
WORLD.

No sooner are fifteen or sixteen presentable guests assembled, (exclusive of the very old ladies who will be sent to the card-room for good the moment a complete rubber has arrived, and the false hair and turbans, who, still clinging to the ball-room, take possession of the best seats to "see the dancing," and unflinchingly keep them all the evening,) than the mistress of the house experiences a slight temporary relief to the uphill attempt at conversation of the last twenty minutes, by thinking that a quadrille may be formed.



Whereupon, the orchestra commences to tune. The piano flourishes in the chord of D minor, whilst the cornet-à-pistons blows through all his joints, turns his instrument topsy-turvy, and performs a pleasing little composition all to

himself, in which the A is very predominant ; and the harp, introducing all the notes of the above-named chord at once, appears carrying on a fierce contest between his own feet and some refractory pedals, which he finally subdues.

The lady of the house throws a comprehensive *coup-d'œil* over her assembled visitors, and at last pitches upon a tall young man, whom some



of you may have met before, with short hair, spectacles, and turned-up wristbands — as if he was about to wash his hands with his coat on. His fate is sealed ; and she advances towards him, blandly exclaiming, “ Mr. Ledbury, allow me to introduce you to a partner.” Hereat Mr. Ledbury blushes, and utters a subdued expression of the happiness he should feel at such a proceeding, and consigning himself to the guardianship of the hostess, is paraded across the room, and presented to a *bouquet* with a young lady attached to it by a chain and ring. “ Miss Hamilton—Mr. Ledbury.” The introduction is accomplished, and the lady pounces upon another couple with the rapidity of a kite in petticoats.

As the quadrille does not commence immediately upon the introduction, and Mr. Ledbury has never seen Miss Hamilton before, and has not the least idea in what style of conversation he should address her—whether she is slow or fast, dullish or clever, a flirt or a prude, and likes music or politics—he suddenly evinces indefatigable perseverance in endeavouring to button his glove, and then assumes an attitude of immovability

near her chair, that would do honour to Madame Tussaud, until the quadrille is forming, when he offers her his arm with a gravity well suited to the important business he is about to enter upon—his first actual speech being, “Is this place agreeable?” in tones of mellifluous and insinuating mildness.

Of *Le Pantalon* we have little to say, for it



passes off in extreme silence ; not a word being spoken, except when some young gentleman begs the pardon of some young lady for treading on her blond flounce in the *chaine Anglaise*. As the opening bars of *L'Eté* are played, Mr. Ledbury, who has been concocting a sentence for the last five minutes, makes a bold effort, and begins the conversation with Miss Hamilton, who appears to be searching after some imaginary object amongst the petals of her *bouquet*.

Mr. L.—Have you been to many parties this season ? (N.B. a safe *entamure*.)

Miss H.—Not a great many.

[*Pause. Mr. Ledbury readjusts the refractory glove button, and Miss Hamilton continues the bouquet investigation. The gentleman invents another sentence.*]

Mr. L.—What do you think of Alfred Tennyson ?

Miss H.—I am sorry to say I have not heard his poetry. (*Minim rest.*) Have you ?

Mr. L.—Oh, yes !—several times.

[*Mr. Ledbury waits to be asked something*

about "Mariana" or "Locksley Hall," which inquiry not arriving, he rubs up an idea upon another tack.]

Mr. L.—What do you think of our *vis-à-vis*?

Miss H.—Which one?

Mr. L.—The lady with that strange head-dress—do you know her?

Miss H.—It is Miss Brown—my cousin.

[Mr. Ledbury wishes a pantomime was being performed, that he might have some chance of falling through a trap, and disappearing into the room below.]

During this interesting conversation, the top and bottom couples have been performing *L'Eté* with all due propriety; but the first confusion takes place as they begin at the sides. We believe it has never yet been definitely agreed upon, notwithstanding the investigation of the most celebrated Terpsichorean professors, who should commence the side figure of *L'Eté*. At first, the company remain perfectly motionless; next, they all rush forward at once, and then as speedily return, each imagining that the other is about to

commencee ; and, at last, some spirited young lady patriotically sacrifices herself, and, like a female Marcus Curtius, in tartalane, plunges into the gulf ; after which, the figure terminates correctly.

La Poule is gone through with tolerable satisfaction to all parties, as its mazes are not very intricate. Mr. Ledbury, during the preceding quadrille, having discovered that Miss Hamilton reads novels, begins to converse thereon ; but, owing to his literary recollections being somewhat indistinct, he gets very much confused in trying to call to mind how Lorimer met Twineh, when he went with Pendennis to Roland Cashel's ; and being suddenly called upon to go on with the dance, he describes various strange figures with his legs upon the carpet, and finally attempts, in his mental absence, to perform a *dos-à-dos*, which everybody knows is quite exploded in rational society, on account of its inevitable and inelegant concussions, and only practised at dancing academies of inferior note, whose pupils bow to each other and to the corners, before the quadrille begins, and love other odious perpetrations of the

basse classe; and select circles, who frolic beneath the illuminated flags, balloons, and V's and A's of the Crown-and-Anchor perambulating ball-room.



CHAPTER VII.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE FIRST QUADRILLE

(continued).

WE cannot sufficiently applaud the philanthropic spirit in

which some humane dancing-master of other days invented *La Trenise* as a substitute for the very nervous *Pastorale*. There was only one good end attained by performing this latter figure; it occasionally enabled circumspect young ladies to form some small

idea of the disposition of any young gentleman they took an interest in, by watching his conduct in this fearful quadrille. If he was naturally of a courageous turn of mind, the *pas seul* did not put him out in the least, but he went through it with all the coolness imaginable, as if he had been dancing to his own image in a large cheval glass; if he was conceited, he now and then attempted an attitude, or twiddled his eyeglass about by its hair guard; if he was timid or retiring, his deportment appeared to express the intense desire he felt to put his legs and arms into his waistcoat pocket, or anywhere else out of the way, as he usually attempted to turn both the ladies; and if deceitful, or fond of subterfuge, he pretended to smile placidly at some visionary friend, as a diversion to his awkward feelings during the solitary exhibition which he was affording the company.

But the constituent dancers of the first quadrille of the evening are seldom game enough to attempt *La Pastorale*, whatever they may do after supper; and so, to Mr. Ledbury's immense relief, he finds *La Trenise* unanimously, and, as it were, spon-

taneously commenced, which said figure is the most milk-and-water, unmeaning, saluting-your-sister affair of the whole set. The preceding quadrilles have infused an homœopathic dose of familiarity into himself and his partner; and as soon as the side-couples fairly begin, he thinks he may venture upon a little more conversation. He therefore makes a pantomimical imitation of using his pocket-handkerchief, and gives a timid cough, just to collect an instant of composure, and then starts again as follows:—

Mr. L.—I wonder whether we shall have two Operas next year. I am dying to know.

[This must be a point of extreme anxiety to Mr. Ledbury, who goes to the gallery about twice in the season.]

Miss H.—So am I.

[Miss Hamilton's friends are decidedly un-theatrical, and the Opera is complete "terra incognita" to her. She ingeniously turns the conversation.]

Miss H.—Do you play any instrument?

Mr. L.—I play the flute a little; do you admire it?

[General axiom. All thin, pale young men, with turned-up wristbands, play the flute, and look as if they tootled all their lungs away through its finger-holes.]

Miss H.—Oh, so very much!

[Of course the same reply would have been made had the instrument in question been the ophicleide or hurdy-gurdy. Slight pause.]

Miss H. (in continuation).—Do you know the Wiltons of Eaton-square?

Mr. L.—I think I know them by name. *[He has never heard of them.]* Are they related to the Wiltons of Camden Town?

Miss H.—Oh, no—at least, I should think not.

[Miss Hamilton can scarcely deem it possible that people living in Eaton-square can have any connexions in Camden Town. Mr. Ledbury feels that he has committed himself, and remains silent. To his relief, La Trenise concludes.]

“Ronde !” shouts the piano, as he finishes the first eight bars of *La Finale*: upon which word of command the company enact a species of refined “Bull in the Ring”—we believe that to be the proper name of a juvenile game ranking amongst the ancient sports and pastimes of the little boys of England, involving inquiries concerning the imaginary key of a chimerical park, and alternate references to a lord and lady. The double *L’Eté* then begins. Our two friends perform the advance movement with due precision; but the opposite couple are not so happy in their effort. The gentleman is a small, withered man, like a date in a dress coat; and the lady one of those ungainly-looking creations in black velvet and artificial flowers, of an age that no living soul could fix within ten or twelve years, who are presumed never to have had an offer, and who appear to stand up in every quadrille for the express purpose of “doing their steps.” The lady is a determined advocate for the *galoppe*. The gentleman has not paid particular attention to that style, and so he is compelled to run backwards and forwards at her side, like a boy at the shafts of



donkey-chaise. Anon the change of partners takes place, whereupon, in extreme confusion, he vacillates wildly about the quadrille, until his lady returns, who drags him once more into order. It is almost needless to state that he smiles blandly on regaining his place, as he makes some pleasant

remarks about "the new-fashioned way," and that he wears ribbed silk stockings, and pumps with round toes and very large ties.

At last the first set terminates : the gentlemen bow, the ladies bend ; and the whole party then begin to indulge in a promenade of great solemnity, by describing a large circle round the room, bearing as grave a demeanour as if they were priests and druidesses marching on for the commencement of Norma. The mistress is slightly fidgety. It is almost too early for her guests to go down for refreshment, because the tea and coffee cups still occupy the spoons and table where the ice is to be at an advanced period of the evening. Besides, ice is expensive ; and since, as we have before stated, the most unimportant and least cared-for guests always arrive the earliest, it is not good policy to introduce anything above negus and rout-cakes before eleven. Whereupon she embarks across the room on a private mission to the leader of the orchestra, and desires him to be good enough to play a waltz. This is the most difficult part of the evening-party tactics. A waltz is never established at any time without

a prolonged desire on the part of everybody to relinquish the honour of commencing it; but



in the *froidueur* of the first attempt, there does not appear the least chance of such a consummation ever taking place; and the musicians play the *Olga* or *Bridal* all through before a single couple can muster up sufficient valour to commence. At last the example is set by one daring pair with the *deux-temps*, timidly followed by another couple with the old affair, and then by another, who get out of step at the end of the first round, after treading severely upon the advanced toes of the old lady in a very flowery cap and plum-coloured satin, who is sitting at the top of the room, and who from that instant deprecates waltzing as a very strange amusement for young ladies, and not at all consistent with her own ideas of feminine decorum. The old ladies, however, are not the only persons who run down waltzing: middle-aged spinsters, who strive to dance with what they conceive to be youthful gaiety—in a quadrille only—are very bitter about the *deux-temps*. So are the men who can't manage it. But it is all of no use.

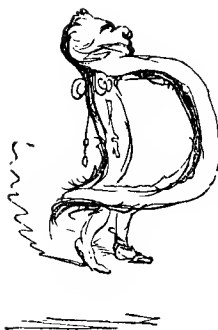
Mr. Ledbury, in the meantime, gets into a temporary scrape, by mistaking a gentleman who

comes into the room in a white neckcloth for the waiter, and requesting he will be good enough to bring him a glass of lemonade.



CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE VOCAL EXHIBITION.



URING the last waltz and quadrille the knocker on the street door has not known an instant of repose; indeed, you would think it was attacked with a violent fit of cold shivers, did you not conceive that the constant percussion must keep it almost at a white heat. It is now that the really nice persons arrive—not the *quarter-past-niners*, who have no other object in view than to dart about in every quadrille like pith figures on an electrifying machine—to look exceedingly warm

after every polka—and to eat enormous quantities of cold fowl and collared eel at supper; but an effective importation of good-looking young men, and a corresponding train of handsome *demoiselles à marier*, whose dresses keep up a continuous rustling, as, shedding rays of beauty and fragrance around them in every direction, they ascend the staircase.

The room fills to a degree, which gives you a very fair idea of the dungeon at Calcutta; fresh introductions take place, and budding flirtations are visible at certain intervals, which only await the influence of a few genial showers of champagne to bring them to maturity. Suddenly a subdued murmur floats about the room, indicative of a wish to obtain silence. *Sh-sh-sh-sh-sh* ! a young lady is about to indulge the company with a song. This announcement delights everybody—the guests are delighted because it is proper and imperative to be so, under such circumstances—the mistress of the house is delighted because the performance carries on time for ten or fifteen minutes—and the young lady herself is delighted, because it is a piece of allowable exhibition, and she anticipates

several pretty compliments when she has concluded.

The process of singing a song at an evening party may be thus described:—The young lady, on being led to the piano, first throws a timid glance round the room—ostensibly to evince a gentle confusion—in reality, to see who is looking at her. She then observes to the mistress of the house, “that she is not in very good voice, having a slight cold,” which she confirms by a faint sound, something between a sigh, a smile, and a single-knock cough. The hostess replies, “Oh, but you always sing so delightfully.” The young lady answers, “that she is certain she cannot this evening;” to strengthen which opinion, she makes some young gentleman exceedingly joyous by giving him her bouquet to hold; and, drawing off her gloves in the most approved style, tucks them behind one of the candlesticks, together with her filmy handkerchief, in such a fashion, that its deep laced border, or embroidered name, may be seen to the best advantage.

The top of the piano, which had been opened for the quadrilles, is then shut down by an active



gentleman, who pinches his fingers in the attempt; the musicians form a series of dissolving views, and disappear, no one knows where, nor ever will; and the young lady takes her place at the piano,

and, as she plays the chords of the key she is about to luxuriate in, everybody is not perfectly silent, so she finds the music-stool is too high, or too low, or something of the kind, and the pedals appear exceedingly difficult to be found. At length, everything being still, she plays the symphony again, and then smiling at the hostess, and saying, "that she is certain she shall break down," brings out the opening note of a recitative, which makes the drops of the chandelier vibrate again, and silences a couple who are whispering all sorts of soft nothings on a *causeuse* in the back drawing-room.

We are going to hazard a passing remark. We think it bad policy for the young lady vocalists of the present day always to choose Italian music for their displays. The performance is but *pseudo-distingué* after all, for it is, perhaps, not going too far to state, that two-thirds of the fair singers are more or less ignorant of the language they are pouring from those cells of pearl and coral, (which commonplace people designate mouths,) except the knowledge derived from the Opera translations; and, in addition, they generally provoke comparison

by selecting the difficult *morceaux* of the great singers. We are not one of those patriotic folks who snarl about "patronising foreigners," with the rest of the hackneyed subjects of discontent, for we acknowledge their musical superiority; but a pretty English girl may depend upon it she never looks so attractive as when singing a pretty English ballad. Let her attempt "Casta Diva" with all due style and execution, and, of course, her hearers will admire her power of voice; let her warble "The May Queen," or "The Grecian Daughter," with the same care and expression, and they will at once fall in love with her. And however correctly she may get through the first mentioned air, the only candid impression left, is, that we have heard it much better done upon the stage.

When the young lady has concluded, and the gentle applause of the kidded palms has died away, the hostess expresses the intensity of her obligation for such a delightful treat, and says, "I am sure, Miss Mitchell, you must require some little refreshment after your exertions;" whereupon useful Mr. Ledbury, who chances to be near the

piano, and has danced once with the lady, offers his arm, and they glide down stairs. Fearful of again falling into his previous *contretemps* with respect to the white neckcloths, he reverses his error, and now mistakes the waiter for one of the guests, blandly inquiring if he heard Miss Mitchell's charming song, which so confuses the poor man, that upon being asked for a glass of lemonade, or rather a custard-cup full, he pours some negus into an ice-plate, and dips a wafer cake into a jug of hot water, which is close at hand to revive the tea-spoons. When Mr. Ledbury and Miss Mitchell go up stairs again, they find a new quadrille has been formed in their absence, upon which they take possession of a vacant cane seat, and having observed that it is very warm, that the rooms are very nice for dancing, and that the music is very good, relapse into their own reflections.

By half-past eleven the proceedings of the evening are in full play, and the various motives and attributes which characterize an evening party pervade every portion of its constituent features. It is not all mere amusement; indeed, there is

often much discontent prevailing. The old ladies have not received sufficient attention ; the young ones have been eclipsed ; the vocalists who brought all their music have not been asked to sing ; the men have lost at cards, and other like vexations. Allow a quadrille to pass by without dancing ; sit quietly in a recess of the windows, half enshrouded by the curtains ; make a fair use of your eyes, and you will find much to entertain. You will see the young men shuffling away when they suspect the hostess wishes to introduce them to some slow-looking partner ; and the young ladies saying they think they shall not dance this time, until the favoured one asks them, when they stand up immediately. You will see the “speculative mammas,” all eyes and Irish poplin, telling their daughters who are flirting with younger sons on the landing that they will catch cold, and desiring them to come into the room ; and you will not fail to observe the attention which the hostess pays to the great people of her acquaintance, how anxious she is for their comfort, although they are generally the queerest objects in the room, and what ingenuity she displays in getting partners

for the unmeaning girls they have brought with them. And finally, you will confess your inability



to imagine what on earth the gentleman with the long hair, who is carefully balancing himself on one leg against the flowerpot-stand, and the girl in pink with the bouquet, can find to talk about so long, and so earnestly.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE POLKA.

THE first waltz is, as we have said, very difficult to establish, but the first polka is still more so. It is only the first, however, that is at all delayed by any disinclination on the part of the dancers to begin. This rubicon once cleared, the engagements are made fast enough; indeed, if you see a nice girl and an undeniable *polkeuse*, whom you wish to dance with, you must be presented at once, or you will only find her available for the third after supper. For there are, at all parties, sly fellows, who hang about and watch the different couples, not choosing to peril their reputation of being good polkers, by the chance of being led up to a young lady whose powers of keeping step in arduous transitions of the dance are feeble; and

they pounce upon the hostess for an introduction so rapidly when the polka is over, that it requires much energy and tact to outwit them.

"You dance the polka, Mr. Ledbury?" observes the hostess or one of her daughters, making an affirmation as much like a question as possible.

"I shall be most happy," replies Mr. Ledbury.

There is an incertitude in his reply, for he mistrusts the back-step, and is not yet sufficiently wound up to perform reckless feats. But young Grimley is in the room; and the Grimleys and the Ledburys are the Capulets and Montagues of their square, and the son of the former house does not dance the polka. Mr. Ledbury feels that he has now a chance of distinguishing himself over his social rival, and he determines to go in and win; whereupon he is conducted to Miss Mitchell—the fair shrine where his peace of mind is to be sacrificed to his ambition.

"Shall we begin?" says Miss Mitchell, who is a very pretty girl, with fair hair and hazel eyes, and a marvellous polkeuse. The room does not allow the slightest opening for any industrious couple anxious to start; but it is crowded with human

obstructions. We may call them standards, as distinguished from wall-flowers.

"I think we had better wait until some one else commences," says Mr. Ledbury.

Upon this he sinks a little in Miss Mitchell's estimation. She calls to mind a feat accomplished at a grand ball at Vintners' Hall, where the citizens wished polka quadrilles instead of the real thing, and had actually formed into sets all over the room; when, with an eligible partner, she went off through the hollow squares, and completely routed the enemy. "Ah! how different Arthur was to this one," she thinks. But these are thoughts that all young ladies are subject to, however eligible may be their partners.

Meantime a bold pair,—be sure one of them is either the son or the daughter of the house—go off, knocking the standards about right and left as if they were skittles.

"Now, I think, we can begin," says Miss Mitchell.

"Certainly," says Mr. Ledbury; and taking Miss Mitchell's left hand in his right, he is about to commence the promenade. But the lady gives

him such a look as he does so, as much as to say, "Where can you have seen the polka danced, to think of perpetrating any of these exploded vulgarities?"

Mr. Ledbury blushes, and immediately falls into the waltz figure. Here he comes out pretty well, as he does not venture into any reverse action; but Miss Mitchell thinks she will sit down sooner than is her wont. The others, however, keep on.

Amongst them you will find several classes of polka dancers. There are the phlegmatic, the excited, and the out-of-time. There are also the mathematical, the confidential, and those who go the pace. These last contrive to get a fair head to look over their right shoulder,—so that the scented curls are in delightful approximation to their own features; and thus, with their arm extended straight out from their body, like that of a finger-post, off they go, preferring the back-step to every other; and twisting, zigzagging, and going-a-head in a manner wonderful to behold.

At last the polka finishes—it lasts a long time though—and then the stairs are blocked up with refreshment-seekers, all in an exceeding state of

flush ; and requiring more cherry-water, lemonade, and vanille ice, than both the men in the whilome tea-room can serve ; especially with regard to propriety of polish amongst the teaspoons. For they are wanted to do double, and even treble duty, with such alacrity, that they come warm from the hot-water in which they have been frantically dipped, to the great detriment of the ice generally.

Important Maxim. If you dance the Polka well yourself, always find out who does the same, before you are let in for a treat by a wild introduction. This may be ascertained by observation, common report, or invidious conversation.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE YOUNG LADIES.



PRESUMING that everybody has at length arrived, let us quietly note down the peculiarities of a few of the guests. As evening parties composed of elderly people alone would be remarkably shady affairs, the younger por-

tion of the assembly, who form its most important part, shall have our first attention.

Place aux Dames! From the speech of the

country showman to the address of the London manager—from the days of Brantôme, and centuries before, to the days of Byron, and we hope centuries after, the ladies claim the first consideration. We discard our steel-pen and rough draft outsides—we take scented post, and quills from the dove's wing; and we write with sparkling Burgundy, in which we can toast (and perhaps roast) our fair subjects as we proceed.

And first, of *The Uninteresting Young Lady*. Those who frequently indulge in evening parties must have observed many hundred specimens of this class. We never went to one ourselves but we discovered several of them; and, nevertheless, they are difficult to describe, so slight an impression do they leave upon the memory. The uninteresting young lady is of the middling stature, with nothing very remarkable in beauty or *tournure*; and if the face be an index of the mind, her own proves of what a small table of contents her intellect is formed. She is generally expensively dressed, without producing the least effect; her clothes looking as if they were dropped on over her head, and then shaken down to their proper places; and

she is addicted to loading her hair with camellias, wreaths, *chenille* impossibilities, and all kinds of floricultural embellishments. She comes very early and stays very late; and should you dance with her, you will find it a most pumping uphill task to establish a conversation. She will either acquiesce with every remark you make, or give a mere monosyllabic reply, and was never yet known to start a subject. She has not been to any of the theatres lately—she does not waltz or polk—she knows little about new books—and she is aware of nothing to the contrary but that it is Corbari who dances the *Cracovienne*, and Mrs. Glover and Miss Cushman who sing *Deh con te* in “Norma.” Your attempt at a *bon mot* is received with the most undeniable tranquillity; and at the close of the quadrille you lead her at once to the spot from whence you took her, bowing gravely, and mentally thanking Providence for all things. It is possible, when seated, that she will put a little nipped-up old-maidish looking figured gauze scarf over her angular shoulders; and it is also probable, should you care to make any inquiry about her, that you will hear she is “extremely well connected.”

The Old Young Lady.—Every one who has visited families where there is a sliding scale of children, must be perfectly aware how unpleasant a period of their lives that is, especially if they be what the world terms “sharp little things,” when



they get too old for the nursery, and too young for the parlour. It is just as awkward with the old young lady. She is getting *un peu passée* for the ball-room, and yet does not deem herself quite advanced enough to be bottled down all the evening with testy and turbaned dowagers and shrivelled-up old husbands of young waltzing wives, to squabble over the last trick but one, at the card-table; and being, moreover, enormously addicted to dancing, she is rather looked at with a slight inward dread by the young men. When not actually engaged, she joins the female wallflowers who border the apartment, consisting generally of antique mammas, the host's maiden sisters, and the odd relations of the family, who were obliged to be asked, but who are only expected to sit still in a corner, look pleasant, wear smart caps, and hold their tongues. When the time for supper arrives, if no cavalier arrives with it, the Old Young Lady walks down by herself very placidly, and when there, pretty plainly convinces you that she does not live upon Patchouli and rout-cakes, whatever she might wish you to believe.

The Young Lady just out is a timid, delicate

creature, scarcely knowing what answer to make to your polite speeches, and afraid to take any



refreshment. The meaning of the term "out" is not perfectly understood, although generally used, not only by the aristocracy amongst whom it originated, but by those in the middle ranks of life who ape their manners. It is usually supposed to mean, "open to an offer," "beginning

to stand in the way of the elder sisters," or, taken in a different sense, "making the mamma more than seven or eight and thirty." On these interests does being "out" depend; and when a young lady is "out," from increased wants and expenditure, *her mother generally knows it.* Our young lady in question does not waltz, except a few gentle turns with her brother, or with another young lady of her own age, after supper, whilst the gentlemen are waging terrible war against the legs of fowls (all the wings and breasts have flown) and the barley-sugar temples. As soon as the quadrille has finished, the young lady just out drops down by her mother's side as you pass in the first round of the after promenade; and mamma usually bends for her with a patronising smile, in return to your obeisance, as you thank her for the honour conferred.

The Loquacious Young Lady is a most extraordinary person; she not only keeps up a constant rattle all the time you are dancing with her, but even during the waltz; when your right arm appears to have some intention of leaving its socket, yet your gallantry will not permit you to

stop without she wishes it, and you would give the world for another couple to knock you out of the circle. We met a splendid specimen of this class the other evening at a house in — no matter where; if we stated it, they would not ask us again, which we should much regret, as their parties are always very pleasant, and you are sure of something besides negus and nobodies. From the time we were introduced to this young lady to the period we quitted her, she never ceased talking. When we first took up our position in the quadrille, we were meditating some remark about the company present, or the French Plays, or something of the same interesting class, when she started off as follows, like an alarum, and never ceased until the quadrille had run down.

“How exceedingly warm it is to-night, and the rooms are so crowded. People should not give such large parties unless there is accommodation for everybody. Have you been very gay yet? *I* have—considering how early it is in the season; in fact, mamma says *I* go out too much. *I* have been up every night this week, and twice to the Opera; which of the theatres do you think the

best ? I like the St. James's, and the Lyceum : oh ! Harley does make me laugh so, I get quite ashamed. But you have not told me yet what is your opinion of Tennyson. Don't you remember—

‘ Is it well to wish thee happy ; having known me, to decline,
On a lower range of feelings, and a narrower heart than mine ?’

Terrible ! is it not ? How his cousin Amy must have felt it ! Do you think he ever had a cousin Amy ? I think he must have had. My brother knows some one who has met him ; he says he is very fond of smoking—do you smoke ?”

“ Indeed I do not.”

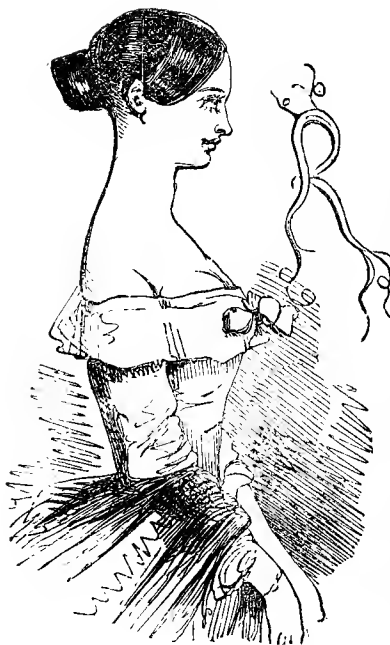
“ I wonder who that young lady is opposite. I don't much like her dress,—*tulle* over rather-too-dirty-to-be-worn-again white satin : it looks as if it had just made its appearance from the rough-dried box. I'm afraid you are a quiz, by your laughing ; I like a little quizzing now and then—good-temperedly, you know. I think it is your turn to begin ‘ *L'Eté.* ’ ”

Here was a little pause ; but as the figure concluded, she commenced again, and continued to the last with an uninterrupted series of remarks

and unanswered questions about La Favorita, Exeter Hall, Prince Albert, Alboni, the Rev. Mr. Montgomery, Jenny Lind, Kensington Gardens, and the Grenadier Guards; and, finally, as a "clencher," which nearly made our hair stand on end, being of a quiet and domestic temperament, she asked us if we went to the Cyder Cellars very often?—if we knew Mrs. Rhodes?—and if we had heard Mr. Ross sing that dreadful song, which her brother was mad after, but wouldn't tell her about? Would we?

CHAPTER XI.

THE SAME (*continued*).



OOM for beauty!
The *belle* of the evening claims our next attention: the lovely dark-eyed girl, so plainly and yet so elegantly dressed, who wears her hair in simple bands over her fair forehead, unencumbered by flower or ornament of any kind, and moves in the light of her own beauty, as the pre-

siding goddess of the room, imparting fragrance to the enamoured air that plays around her. How many quadrilles deep she is engaged for!—how earnestly an introduction is requested!—how fortunate it is even to be her *vis-à-vis*! and what a thrill of inexplicable happiness pervades our sense—what an ecstasy of admiration—what a mesmeric throb of pleasure as we take her hand in the *chaîne des dames*! And for the Polka! those brilliant intoxicating moments, which come so rarely to brighten our dim career, are cheaply purchased by hours of unpleasantry and disappointment! And who does not associate the fairest portions of this life with the shadowy remembrance of some exquisite creature, who endowed him, for the time, with a species of a Daguerreotype existence by the light of her presence alone, her absence forming its shadows!

We appear to be getting philosophically poetical—we are not often taken so, and must plead in excuse the exciting cause of our present indisposition. The beauty of the ball has sometimes one uncomfortable characteristic, which her very position generates; she is an out-and-out flirt. At

one party she will talk softly to you for half an hour together in the conservatory, with no other witnesses than some flower-pots, paper camellias, and a Chinese lamp ; at another, she will all but cut you for a new cavalier with an imperial, which you do not wear. In the first situation, you will think evening parties the poetry of society : in the last, you will pronounce them to be very indifferent amusements, after all. She is, moreover, very capricious ; and having refused all invitations to waltz, on the plea of giddiness, will eventually stand up with another handsome girl, and twirl away *à deux temps* for a quarter of an hour. Possibly this is for the express purpose of tantalizing all the young gentlemen in the room, upon the same principle that makes young ladies kiss babies so rapturously before company.

The Professed Flirt is not always the beauty of the room, but still sufficiently good-looking to attract several *pro tempore* lovers. And it is remarkable what diplomatic ingenuity she puts forth in carrying on a flirtation with three or four young gentlemen at the same time. The mere shade, the very idea of a gentle pressure of the

hand as she meets you in the last figure, induces you to believe yourself the favoured one. But you are mistaken : she has made three or four others equally self-satisfied by the same proceeding ; and just as she has half given, half allowed you to take a flower from her *bouquet*—which



you intend to place in water when you get home to your chambers as a romantic souvenir, and afterwards, when withered, to treasure up in your dressing-case for an indefinite period, amidst a similar collection of *gages d'amour*, such as old rose-leaves, odd sandals, shrivelled violets, very crumpled notes scented with patchouli, locks of silky and odoriferous hair that have made the paper which envelopes them very transparent, and perhaps a vinaigrette or turquoise ring—you find she has offered to mark some other happy swain's handkerchief with his initials and her own hair. Wherefore you set her down as a heartless coquette, and the gentleman as a thorough muff; but you do not throw away the lily of the valley notwithstanding. And even when she waltzes with him, and asks you to hold her delicate scarf, which resembles point lace in a consumption, you are still gratified by the honour. She does not admire being cooped up in the ball room all the evening. She is very fond of going down for refreshment; not that she stands in need of any, but it removes her from the *espionnage* of her chaperon; and if there is one situation she pre-



fers more than another, it is sitting on the staircase outside the drawing-room door, under pretence of enjoying the cool air.

The Belle has different opinions formed of her. Old mammas, with unmarriageable daughters, pronounce her "an exceedingly forward young woman." Young ladies, who are a little jealous, think her "a very strange girl in her manners;" and the young gentlemen speak of her according to their temperaments and ideas of perfection, as "a splendid creature," "a girl with no humbug about her," "a black-eyed stunner," or (unfeminine yet expressive appellation) "a thorough-going brick; and no mistake!"

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE WALLFLOWER.



WITH this fair lady we lay down our dove-quill, and resume our Gillott, for

The Wallflower.—

The Wallflower of a party usually makes his appearance at an early period of the evening. You generally observe him as you enter the house

taking off a pair of clogs, which appear difficult to unbuckle, in a corner of the hall. These he stuffs into

the pocket of his great coat, which he artfully conceals under a chair, together with his hat; and having accomplished this undertaking to his satisfaction, he enters the refreshment-room, and in excessive trepidation asks for a cup of coffee, which he swallows "hot without"—declining milk, cream-lump sugar, or powdered candy, not on account of its being his custom, but because he does not exactly know which he ought to take. He next produces from his pocket a pair of kid gloves, still enveloped in paper, the left hand one of which he puts on with much labour, and then holds the other in it. This concluded, he announces his name, and walks up stairs, as if he were ascending the platform of the guillotine.

"Mr. John Parkins!" shouts a footman, and the Wallflower enters. Mrs.—(what shall we call the hostess?—whatever name we give her, there will be some one certain to say it is personal: we will take our own—it is a tolerably safe one)—Mrs. Smith, then—an imaginary person as regards ourselves—is engaged at the moment, and has left her station at the door; consequently Mr. Parkins walks into the centre of the room, looking very

affable and mildly benevolent, with his glove still in his hand, and, not finding anybody to receive



him, blushes up to his ears, blows his nose for the sake of doing something, and then sinks back to the post of the folding-doors between the front and back drawing-room—the position in which Wallflowers mostly abound.

They occasionally attempt a quadrille, but they rarely waltz or polk. Nevertheless, we once knew one who made the attempt, but then it was after supper, when they at times “come out” in most extensive style, as a very little wine has a very great effect upon their brain. The Wallflower in question had evidently miscalculated his abilities; for, after treading on his partner’s toes, losing the step in the first round, getting out of the circle, and knocking the man who was playing the piano completely off the music-stool, he desisted, and reeled giddily to his scat—a melancholy instance of misdirected vanity.

The Wallflowers appear, like corks in a water-butt, to have an instinctive manner of getting all together; for, after a time, they generally congregate in coterics, making small jokes, and retailing third-rate anecdotes, which they applaud

and admire exceedingly, until they are interrupted by an enthusiastic couple, flying round to the *Eclipse*, and knocking them very unexpectedly all up in a heap together.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE SUPPER.



AFTER some six or eight quadrilles, and a proportionate number of waltzes and polkas, intermingled with another song or two, one of which was from a professional gentleman who gives concerts

at the Hanover-square Rooms, and attends the party in the anticipation of eventually disposing of several half-guinea tickets, as well as the extraordinary performance of some young lady on the piano, who plays a piece thirty pages long, which gives you a very fair idea of eternity, and sets you thinking what offence the keys and wires have been guilty of to be treated in so violent a manner, and hoping at the same time they are not often taken so —after all this, we repeat, there is an unusual movement in the room towards the door, commencing with the turbans and velvet hats, from which you infer that supper has been announced. The hostess requests Mr. Ledbury to take down a lady with him, whereupon he offers his arm to his former partner, Miss Hamilton; and they follow in the wake of the others, until they arrive at the dining-room, where there is rather an obstruction during the attempts made by those who have already entered to arrange ninety guests upon six rout-stools.

There is something peculiarly exhilarating in the appearance of the long, glittering table, with its bright wax lights and brighter *évergues*, and

artificial bouquets, and temples, and wine coolers. Of course, it must be well furnished, and not depend entirely upon the splendid starvation plan, where cut-glass and plate are crowded on the table as an excuse for cold fowls and pâtés de Strasburg. Once we remember to have seen a lobster salad made out of boiled cod; but then we think the people deserved extreme credit for their ingenuity.

The company being at length arranged with tolerable accommodation, the ladies sitting and the gentlemen standing behind them, like so many superior butlers—the white neckcloths, in some instances, strengthening the resemblance—Mr. Ledbury asks Miss Hamilton what he may have the pleasure of procuring for her? and Miss Hamilton thinks she will take a “little chicken,” meaning, of course, the portion of one; whereupon Mr. Ledbury harpoons the last of the merry-thoughts with desperate energy, and procures a slice of glazed tongue with equal celerity; and Miss Hamilton upon receiving it, plays with the merrythought for a minute or two, cutting small pieces from it about the size of an oat, two or

three of which she manages to swallow, and then lays down her knife and fork in token of having finished. Hereat Mr. Ledbury thinks what a *very* little Miss Hamilton eats, and how remarkably *comme il faut* is a small appetite; whereas he might have altered his opinion had he seen Miss Hamilton that day at one o'clock, when she was



suddenly struck with admiration of some dish which she met on the stairs going up to the nursery dinner.

Having taken a "little wine" with this young lady, Mr. Ledbury next challenges Miss Mitchell, who is at a little distance up the table. Miss Mitchell inclines her head in token of acquiescence;

and whilst her gentleman-in-waiting is asking some one else to pass down the white wine, perfectly forgets all about it; so that Mr. Ledbury stands in a most graceful *pose*, with the glass raised halfway to his lips, waiting to bow, until, perceiving the engagement is quite forgotten, he inclines his head to some collared eel, and drinks off the half glass of Moselle in great confusion.

In the centre of the table is a lighthouse made of rout-cakes, standing in the midst of a tempestuous sea of trifle. Nobody, up to the present moment, has been bold enough to attack it; but under the influence of the first champagne, some young gentleman thrusts a spoon into the middle of it, and transfers a few of its billows to the plate of a young lady, together with the distressed mariner, in coloured sugar, who is clinging to a rock of *meringues à la crème*. The edifice is speedily demolished, and the barley-sugar bird-cage follows; although there are still a few goths, presumed to be people from the country, who think it almost a pity that such pretty things should be destroyed; and scrape up one or two of the ornaments to take home with them.

Snap!! there goes the report of the first cracker bonbon, followed by the faintest, prettiest cry from Miss Mitchell you ever heard. A tiny piece of liliputian music, such as a fairy would sing from, is wrapped round the almond, which falls from the gilt envelope. There is a charming little struggle to possess it, which terminates in favour of Miss Mitchell. Then the young gentleman requests her to read it, and Miss Mitchell refuses, and the young gentleman insists, and Miss Mitchell blushes and crumples it up, and the young gentleman uses a little gentle force to seize it, and reads as follows :—

“ Le nom de celle que j’aime
Je le cache dans mon cœur ;
Nul ne le sait que moi-même,
C’est mon secret, mon bonheur ! ”

After which he thrusts it into the pocket of his white waistcoat to keep as a souvenir, where it remains throughout many washings, until quite obliterated.

Meanwhile, after many internal struggles for resolution, Mr. Ledbury seizes a cracker, and offers one of its fringed ends to Miss Hamilton.

The same snap and the same start occur, and there is the same anxiety to read the motto. One or two of them discharged simultaneously give the following results—to all of which Miss Hamilton exclaims, “Oh ! how absurd to be sure !”

“How could my guileless eyes your heart invade,
Had it not first been by your own betrayed.”

“A mon amour, si pur, que votre amour réponde,
Et mon bonheur pourra faire le dot d'un monde.”

“I live but in the sunshine of your eyes,
And yet your cruel heart their light denies.”

At the extreme end of the table are seated a young lady and a young gentleman who have been dancing a good deal together—they were the same we have before noticed—and who have just pulled one of the crackers. He is reading the motto to her in so low a tone that she is obliged to bring her face close to his—so close, indeed, that at the moment when he whispers its impassioned words into the most beautiful ear possible to conceive, encompassed by a perfumed trellis of the darkest,

silkiest hair in the world, his lips all but touch it. This is the motto:—

“Viens! viens! ange du ciel, je t’aime, je t’aime!
Et te le dire ici, c’est le bonheur suprême!”

In the course of another ten minutes, the ladies return up stairs, having made all sorts of engagements for after-supper dances; and with the disappearance of the last retreating flounce the male guests sit down, and commence an attack upon the eatables. In the midst of the clatter of changing plates and passing down dishes and wine-glasses, a gentleman with his hair curled, and his wristbands turned up, rises from his seat, and says he is sure that every one present must feel how much they are indebted to the presence of the softer sex for life’s brightest moments *(cheers)*: that they are passing a most delightful evening, and cannot but feel most grateful to their amiable hostess for her exertions to promote their enjoyment. He therefore begs they will fill bumpers to the health of Mrs. Smith and the ladies. *(More cheers, and great rushing about of pint decanters.)*

The toast being given and drunk with the

usual honours, in which everybody uses his own version, Mr. Smith pours out a glass of Madeira, and rising from his seat, speaks as follows, with the interpolations made, *sotto voce*, from different guests.

1911 “Gentlemen (*cheers*),—It is with the greatest pleasure that I rise to return you my most sincere and heartfelt thanks for the kind manner in which you have received the last toast (*Give me some tongue, Ledbury*); and I can safely declare I never feel so truly happy (*thicker, thicker*) as when I am surrounded by my friends (*that’ll do*) and I am sure Mrs. Smith feels the same. (*Much applause, and curious rough music from the handles of dessert knives against the plates and tumblers.*) We shall at all times be most happy to see you (*I wish he’d cut it short; I want to be upstairs again with the ladies*); and I hope, although this is the first time (*send down the brandy-cherries, will you?*) I have had the honour of meeting some of you, that it will not be the last. (*Fresh rough music—a medical student at the end of the table breaks a wine-glass.*) We shall, I trust, have many such meetings: and if you have been pleased this

evening by our humble endeavours to (*try that pie, old fellow—it's rather extensive*) entertain you, I only hope, by way of gratitude, you will come again. (*Bravo! bravo!*) Gentlemen, I beg again to thank you for the honour you have conferred upon Mrs. Smith and myself, and can only hope, when you marry, you will find as excellent a wife as I have got, although I say it myself. (*Well done! Capital! Bravo!*) I beg to drink all your very good healths in return."

The host sits down amidst a whirlwind of applause, which continues nearly a minute, until the orange-chips jump off the *épergne* from the vibration of the table; and a young gentleman, appearing that evening for the first time in a tail-coat and gills, and who is engaged to a very nice little girl for the first waltz after supper, slinks quietly out of the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

AFTER SUPPER.



IT is not to be denied that the most agreeable period of an evening party generally commences just as the guests begin to think of going away. Accordingly, the young gentlemen who are aware of this do not sit long at the supper table, but shirk up stairs in detachments—their countenances radiant with mirth and enjoyment, and all *mauvaise honte* quite

submerged in the last glass of wine. Mr. Ledbury is remarkably animated and facetious. He has placed a turnip-dahlia, which was skewered on to the root of a tongue, in his button-hole, and is now asking a young lady to dance to whom he has never been introduced. The musicians have not yet come up from their own supper, and Miss Mitchell is very kindly playing "The Chatsworth" to eight young ladies, who are dancing the quadrille by themselves before a throng of young gentlemen, who keep observing that "it's really too bad," and "quite tantalizing;" whilst the French scarf and long hair have secluded themselves into the window recess more than ever, and are perfectly lost to everything else in the rooms. A stout old gentleman in tights and spectacles, with a shining bald head and merry twinkling eye, who has not been visible before from remaining in the card-room, and is presumed to be the favourite apothecary of the family, who ushered all its olive branches into existence, is apparently saying some very funny things to a knot of laughing girls by the piano, including Miss Mitchell, who occasionally throws in a casual

observation or reply, in that disjointed *staccato* manner which young ladies usually adopt who try to talk whilst they are playing. At length the set is finished, and every one of the fair daneers approaches the piano and thanks Miss Mitchell for her kindness, who replies with becoming humility as she resumes her gloves, and gives place to the real musicians.

The first waltz after supper is the most exhilarating part of the evening's programme. The cornet is aware of this, and blows a perfect hurricane of notes through the tubes of his instrument, whilst the dance is prolonged to a most extended period, the musicians being conscious that the longer they play, the more the waltzers will be fatigued, and the sooner the party will break up. But, nevertheless, they enter into the diffused animation, and play all the most inspiring sets. Now come the *Flic-flac* and *Enfer* quadrilles; and a young gentleman, inclined to melody, stations himself near the piano, and introduces an obligato upon the wine-glasses, until he breaks one of them from attempting a passage too *forte*.

About a quarter to three the mistress becomes rather nervous, instituting a mental calculation as to how long the decreasing wax candles will burn before they set the green ornaments on fire ; and she also sees that one of the burners of the chandelier, which has been turned up three times by a tall gentleman, still looks fearfully *going-outish* through its ground glass shade. But her politeness never forsakes her ; and when, to her inexpressible joy, she sees Mr. and Miss Chamberlayne advancing to bid adieu, she says, “ Oh ! but you must not think of going yet—it is so *very* early ! ” and Miss Chamberlayne simpers and replies, “ Oh ! no—indeed it’s very late, and I am sure you must be exceedingly fatigued with your exertions ; ” and then a young gentleman, who is engaged to Miss Chamberlayne for the next quadrille, says she must stay, and Mr. Chamberlayne does not see the necessity, with which idea the hostess inwardly coincides, although she says, “ There, Mr. Chamberlayne, you see it is of no use to go yet,” as his daughter walks off with her partner, and the old gentleman remains at the door until the set is finished, in a state of extreme fidget.

At length the evening draws towards its conclusion. The man at the piano, who has been up every evening, except Sundays, for the last six weeks until four and five o'clock, has played the whole of the last quadrille with his eyes shut; and the *cornet-à-piston* would long ere this have dropped fast asleep had he not kept himself on the alert by the noise of his own instrument. And yet so indefatigable are some of the guests, that when their number is reduced to twenty, and half the lights have disappeared, the very joyous gentleman with his hair curled, skips across the room, and entreats Mr. Ledbury to take a partner for Sir Roger de Coverley. But he has quite exhausted all his powers of dancing; and having paid his departing respects to the lady of the house, he walks down stairs, labours under some insane expectation of finding his own hat, or madly deeming that the ticket pinned upon it corresponds with the one in his waistcoat-pocket.

What a contrast the cold streets and damp pavement—the waterman clumping about with his lantern, and the sleepy coachmen dreaming on their boxes—present to the scene he has just



quitted! It would be remarkably dispiriting, but the champagne has not *yet* quite lost all its magic glamour, and Mr. Ledbury trudges homewards in a tolerably good humour, having determined to walk, and save the cab fare. Being slightly exhilarated, he evinces considerable perseverance in endeavouring to tread exactly upon the middle of the flag-stones of the pavement, and he thinks himself extremely neglectful if he omits to place

his heel upon the roundabout iron of every coal-cellar that falls in his way. Young men of low ideas have been known to ask policemen "if it was too late to get any beer in the neighbourhood;" and some are reported to have been so perfectly lost to good-breeding as to have dived into the Coal Hole or the Café de l'Europe at unholy hours of the morning, and ordered devilled kidneys and stout; but fortunately these instances of dissipation are as rare as they are appalling.

But Mr. Ledbury is not one of these. He goes straight home, and with the assistance of the latch-key and a rushlight, arrives safely in his own bedroom. His first deed is to take a long draught of cold water from the *carafe* on the wash-hand-stand, which he nearly empties; and then he proceeds to undress, flinging his clothes quite at random all about the floor. Having jumped into bed, he does not immediately fall asleep, but passes all the events of the evening in review before his imagination, and on first closing his eyes experiences a whizzing kind of sensation, as if innumerable trains filled with ideas were passing on railroads all about his brain. At last, as the

grey dawn enables him to distinguish the situation of the window, he falls asleep; and anon a vision of singular intricacy haunts his slumbers. In distinct forms of people moving about in a vast quadrille—myriads of chandeliers in all directions indulging in the same diversion to wild sounds of the cornet and harp, re-echoing the finale of some popular set *ad infinitum*—and above all, multiplied resemblances of Miss Hamilton's features beaming upon him from every point, which dart away the instant he attempts to look at them, like the small objects which sometimes float before your eyes after you have been looking at the sun, or dining with a large party at Blackwall.

Fair readers—for we have chiefly endeavoured to amuse the young ladies, whose devoted servant we are, far before the Critics, and even “The People,” in our present Physiology—the lights are extinguished or burnt out; the host and hostess have heard that all the spoons and forks are correct, and retired to bed; the last young man has departed, and gone yawning down the steps as the early milkmaid is commencing her daily round;



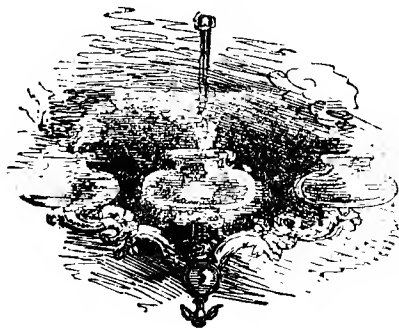
and the bright eyes that lent additional brilliancy to the assembly are veiled in sleep. Our evening party is at an end. We could, by following the goldbeating style of literature, keep on for several chapters; but we do not intend to weary you with the monotony of a long-continued subject: we would wish you to finish the last chapter with the same smile of approbation, if we have deserved it, which you bestowed upon the first.

We assure you, that in the foregoing light sketches, we have scrupulously avoided the slightest approach to personality. During their progress we have encountered some tempting subjects in society for our purpose; but we have at all times shrunk from identifying private individuals with our pages. It would have pained us keenly did we suppose that any one, to whose hospitality we had been indebted for a pleasant evening, imagined we had drawn one character from their parties or their friends. Doubtless, in this vast metropolis, there are many Miss Mitchells and Miss Hamiltons; but we can firmly assert, our own two young ladies are perfectly imaginary beings, whom we have christened at hazard.

Perhaps, ere long, we may be again at work for **your amusement**—if, indeed, any passing whim in the little trifle now before you has provoked one **of your musical laughs.**

We will conclude for the present in the words of Miss Chamberlayne, when she bade good night to the lady of the house:—

“We are extremely obliged to you for your attention.”



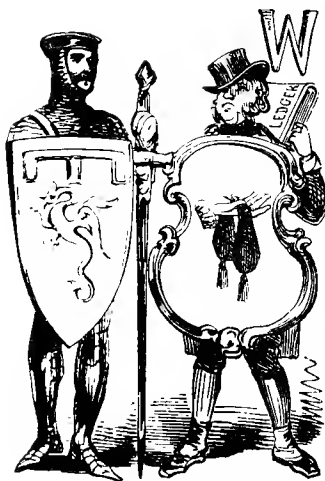
SKETCHES OF THE DAY.

(FIRST SERIES.)

PART III.

STUCK-UP PEOPLE

PREFACE.



WHAT do you mean by "Stuck-up People?" was a question we were asked scores of times, when our little friend the Ballet-girl first carried forth the announcement of the subject on

her back, to the reading world.

We hope that in the following pages will

be found a clear explanation of the term—one that, had we cared to use a French title, might have been expressed pretty aptly by *Parvenu*. We do not intend to be particularly funny in working out our notion: authors who are always straining to be so, become at last as great nuisances as people who have always got “something rather good” to tell you. We are alone about to expose, as simply and truthfully as we can, the foolish conventionalities of a large proportion of the middling classes of the present day, who believe that position is attained by climbing up a staircase of money-bags.

We purpose, then, to further this end by showing up a purse-proud family of our acquaintance, with whom many of our readers may have before been upon terms of familiarity

in their own circle ; or in a periodical to which we once introduced them. Yet, understand us : we are not about to drag forward any private individuals upon the platform of our public exhibition, for such a proceeding we have ever shrunk from. Nor are we going to sneer at wealth, or the institutions of society—very far from it. Both are excellent things in their way. But we wish to attack the tinselled automata—the brilliant wet blankets, who form what the stuck-up world at present calls “stylish connexions.” We mean the members of those coteries, who, located in Belgravia or “Tyburnia,” are found either struggling to outdo each other, or all giving in to the whims of one particular individual : like so many geese, following one pertinacious old gander to a pond, where

they do not seem to care much about the water, but think they must go because he leads.

These good people, in fine, partake largely of the nature of mushrooms—inasmuch as they have not only sprung up with great rapidity to their present elevation, but have also arisen from mould of questionable delicacy. But now they have no more to do with their former position than has the white button-like fungus in the pottle of the west-end fruiterer with the impure soil from which it drew its vitality



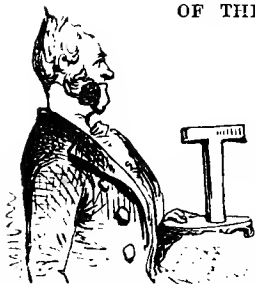
THE NATURAL HISTORY
OF
'STUCK-UP' PEOPLE



CHAPTER I.



OF THE 'STUCK-UP' FAMILY
GENERALLY.



THE head of the family, whose natural history we are about to put forth, is Mr. Spangle Lacquer. He is reported to have made a great deal of money somehow or another, but in what precise way is not known: and he

has passed through the three degrees of comparison appropriated to commercial wealth, in the stages of shopkeeper, tradesman, and merchant. He prefers an uncomfortable house at an enormous rent in the Hyde Park division of the Blue Book to any of the most eligible mansions he could command for half the sum in a less fashionable part of the town, because stylish persons live there, and he may be taken for one of them. Mrs. Spangle Lacquer is a very fine lady. She dresses by the fashion-books, believing *berthe* and birth to be words of equal worth in the world, and has reserved seats at all fashionable morning concerts: indeed were she not to be seen at M. Benedict's, she would not hold up her head for the season afterwards.

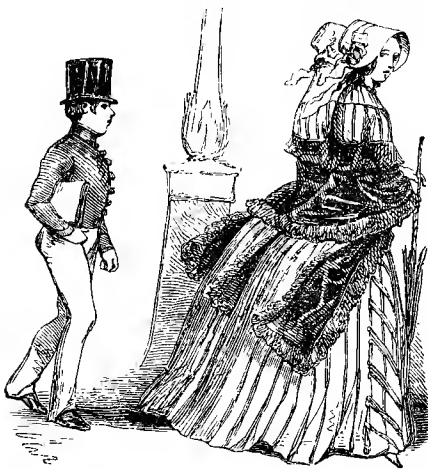
She has also a pew in a very fashionable church, where religion is made a medium for the display of bonnets in the interior and liveries at the doors: and where some theological partisanship is supported by the clergyman,



who puts on a black robe when he ought to wear a white one ; or turns one way when he reads instead of another ; or has an altar built out from the wall instead of into it ; or performs other antics so well calculated to shake the faith of all in our sublime national creed, when

they see that upon such almost contemptible points does its holy purity appear to depend.

The young lady Lacquers are immature daguerreotypes of their mother. Their names are Emily and Elizabeth, which they spell, at the end of notes, "Emilie" and "Bessie." They talk much of the Opera and "the Gardens" during the season; and never go out shopping



without a page at their heels, except when in their carriage.

As all the world knows the Lacquers have a barouche, of course there is no degradation in their sometimes honouring the earth with their step, with the aforesaid page behind them. Otherwise, the attendance of the retainer is a gloomy piece of poor importance: it always seems to express—"We would keep a carriage if we could."

Young Mr. Lacquer is a specimen of the gentlemanly gent. He haunts the thoroughfares of the west end, and calls his lodgings "chambers:" his other peculiarities we shall hereafter allude to. The whole family, having a large connexion, are perpetually visiting and receiving company—not from any gratification they themselves derive from society, but because they think such laborious indefatigability necessary, in following up the most approved precepts of fashion, to enable them to retain their

position amidst the crowd of people which they call the World.

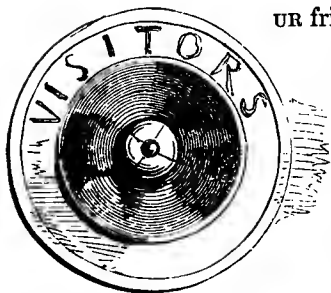
These, then, are our acquaintances, with whom, as we have stated, we are particularly intimate: and whose domestic economy we are about to unfold



CHAPTER II.



OF THE LACQUERS' DRAWING-ROOM.



UR friends the Lacquers reside in a very fashionable part of town, and affect to know nothing of the commercial districts of London. This

is the more remarkable, because Mr. Lacquer amassed his gold in those less favoured localities, from soap, bones, tallow, rags, or something equally interesting, by a process of alchemy, which leaves all the old philosophers far behind. But of course all this is scarcely ever recollected by their friends, who, on first

making their acquaintance, are so dazzled by their display, that they are, for a time, blind to everything beyond it, until their eyes get accustomed to the glare, when they recover their usual vision; and sometimes look deeper than they ought. For artificial display is dangerous to have anything to do with, and resembles a Chinese firework—very flashy and bewildering at first sight, but if kept up too long its coruscations are found to proceed only from the revolutions of a few bits of coloured transparent paper shining with a borrowed light.

The house in which the Lacquers reside is, as old Pepys would say, “pleasant to behold,” and the street door appears to have put on a suit of brass armour—there being plates of the visitor’s bell, and the servant’s bell, and the kitchen bell, as well as the family name of the Lacquers, and a command that you will “ring also,” and a notification of the slit for “letters;” with other amusing and ornamental tablets—

possibly for the purpose of being spelt for entertainment whilst you are waiting—until the door resembles a trunk-maker's display of pattern plates. All these things, however, the Lacquers look upon as great improvements upon the habit of our forefathers, in whose time the only way to get into a house was simply to knock at the door. An old lady, a friend of ours also, who lives opposite—a simple quiet body, whose idea of enjoying life consists in sitting at the window for a certain time every day in a grand cap, and watching her neighbours—has informed us that whichever bell you ring the same person always appears to answer it. So that the whole process resembles that gone through with the toy used to gamble with for small gingerbread buttons at fairs, where you pull strings, and a doll's head pops up from a hole with a number on it; and where, on each attempt to improve your luck, the same puppet always rises, and never

with the largest number. We have therefore come to the conclusion that these various bells have for their object, not so much the division of labour amongst the domestics, as to announce to the inmates when any one is going to make a call—a sort of prompter's signal to "clear," which means that they must get into their places and dispose of all unseemly properties before the drama begins. And this leads us to give an excellent piece of advice. Whenever you make a morning call at a house, never, inadvertently, or with the air of a careless loungeur, turn up the sofa cushions, or you will be certain to make both yourself and your friends uncomfortable, by the unexpected display of some *mal-a-propos* object or another that "those tiresome children must have hidden there."

Having determined, after much careful investigation, which bell you are to pull, you are presently admitted by a footman. But as it is

too much trouble for that domestic to go up to the drawing-room with you, he walks to the end of his beat, at the foot of the staircase, and there gives you in charge to another domestic, in whose company you ascend. Arrived at the drawing-room, the footman gives you a chair, pokes the fire, puts some coals on, clatters the fire-irons, tells you his mistress will be down directly, and leaves you to your own meditations.

In walking about the drawing-room at the Lacquers, the chief rule to be observed is to keep your coat-tails under your arm (as Alfred walked with Dorinda through the flower-garden in Bewick's old wood illustration to *The Looking Glass*—a good book rapidly becoming extinct) for fear of knocking over the curiosities crowded into the apartment. There are such wonders of nature and art displayed upon every practicable point of furniture, that the room is a concentrated essence of Wardour Street and Howell and James's. The card-bowl is the

At the end of the table a tiny flirtation has been going on all supper-time, between a little elfin lady of five years old, and a young gentleman who has not yet exchanged his tunic for a jacket. He holds her baby hand in his, and looks terrible things at Master Howard, who sits on the other side and will keep putting his arm round her neck and kissing her, which is a shocking thing to do at any time of life—in company. Then the first pulls the little *belle* closer to him, and says that she shall be *his* wife; and did not an elder sister set them all to rights, the consequences would be dreadful.

For Master Howard is a bad boy, and the terror of the square within the rails. He can pinch with singular sharpness, and makes predatory excursions amongst the other children's nine-pins and pewter Life-guards. And at parties like the present, he has been known to beat the more submissive guests with their

own dolls, even to tears ; or knock them, with the gay *brioche*, off from the sofa, converted for the time into a coach, drawn by two arm-chairs and a music-stool, unicorn.

When Master Howard is quieted, the two others get together closer than ever, and the little girl perhaps says "I love you," with a sincerity and disinterested fervour that only belongs to that age. And then they have some little joke between them, not known to anybody else, but of such subtle excellence, that it is only sufficient for them to look at one another to burst out into the merriest and most musical laughter.

The attachment is no affair of secrecy. He won't dance with anybody else ; and when they play at *Family coach*—and she is "Aunt Jemima," and he is "the little dog," and that singular accumulation of misfortune begins which characterizes the luckless journey in that ill-fated vehicle—whatever may be the confusion and

Berlin wool; but woe betide you if you sit on it; and there are cups, and saucers, and miniatures; inkstands, handbells, and *papier-mâché* nothing-cases, enough to start a bazaar. Some of the curiosities are not very pretty, but worth

a great deal of money, which is not an uncommon attribute of ugliness generally.



But the chief amusement for the morning visitor in waiting is Miss Lacquer's album, which lies on the table amidst some showily-bound reli-

gious books. It is a very gorgeous affair, with light pink, and light green, and light blue, and buff, and tea-coloured pages—a literary drawing-room rat-trap, which no one dares to peep into without being caught to pay a visit to his Parnassus. Then there

are such sweet rice-paper blue butterflies, all with curved antennæ; and such lovely tinted peacocks and birds of paradise, such shells and seaweed, and singular fuschias—such Byron Beauties, Shakespere Heroines, and Flowers of Loveliness; and such a beautiful gipsy on the first page, begging for scraps, that it is quite refreshing to think there are still such lovely *Bohémien*nes in the world. And the literary portion of this costly book is very pretty indeed. There are the celebrated lines beginning, “Black eyes most dazzle at a ball,” written with a crow-quill; and there is also a view of the Bridge of Sighs, done on the middle of a perforated card, with the stanzas underneath

“I stood at Venice,”

which the writer, be sure, never did in his or her life, nor was ever likely to. There are also some verses about “a Moss Rose”

underneath a charming flower-painting-taught-in-six-lessons specimen; and an affecting sonnet "Upon hearing an infant sneeze in its sleep." There are, besides, some lines about "My little foot-page," which are whispered as the production of Miss Lacquer herself, but which do not mean the small boy in buttons attached to the establishment; and many other excellent *morçeaux* tending in the highest degree to assist genteel reason and refined reflection. And there is a fashionable drawing-room ballad, written by Miss Lacquer, and composed by her music-master, after the style of a celebrated modern lyric poet, which we here subjoin:—

BALLAD FROM A MS. GRAND OPERA.

"WHEN FOND AFFECTION."

When fond affection's memory flings
Her ivied mantle o'er the past,
And grief its calm reflection brings
To vanished hopes o'er bright to last;

One word alone should then be spoken,
 One word alone the soul can tell,
 By which e’en hollow hearts are broken,
 The lingering murmur—Fare-thee-well !

When happiness in gilded wear
 Shall mask the cheek with transient smiles,
 And lighten up life’s landscape drear
 With tales of love and beauty’s wiles ;
 What still is in the power of words
 The deep love of the heart to tell ?
 It is the harp’s sad dying chords,
 The lingering murmur—Fare-thee-well !

Then there is a great admirer of Alfred
 Tennyson who hath perpetrated the following—
 imitation being the sincerest flattery :—

LADY VIOLET VAVASOUR.

Lady Violet Vavasour,
 For me you need not keep a stall ;
 You thought to get my five-pound note,
 And give no change, but keep it all.

But though I came prepared to buy,
I saw the snare and I retired ;
A wool-worked mat, at such a price,
Is not a thing to be desired.

Lady Violet Vavasour,
You put strange fancies in my head,
Since twice, at Lady Harclay's ball,
You all but waltzed young Howard dead.
Oh ! your small feet—your deux-temps fleet,
Most fascinating you may be,
But such a fright you made him look,
That you had hardly cared to see.

Lady Violet Vavasour,
You pine amidst your pasteboard towers,
Your drawings, autographs, and lace,
Your slippers, purses, and wax flowers,
For that bright Blonde sells more than you :
There, lay that five-peund urn-mat down,
And give me that pincushion heart,
Too dearly bought at half-a-crown.

The above lines were written by a young barrister after a fancy-fair at which the Lacquers assisted, and to which we shall presently refer.

Miss Lacquer had at one time no very great notion of Tennyson, having heard he was simply natural—and consequently common-place—in his poetry: but since she had seen his works at a great house she called at (we all know the “great house” of our connexions) she had become one of his devoted admirers. And when she at last heard that the Queen admired his writings, she became wild in her enthusiasm: and was always wishing that she were the Queen o’ the May to be called early.

The same contributor played her album a sad trick. He promised to procure her a poem by Mr. Monckton Milnes, which quite overcame Miss Lacquer, as she had seen that gentleman’s name so often at leading *réunions* (“amongst the company present” that the *Post* noticed) that she was sure he must be a nice poet. But her young friend sent back the album with these verses, which somewhat puzzled her as to their authenticity:—

THE LONG-AGO.

In the antique dealer's store,
Precious chairs and tables sleep,
Which were not, in days of yore,
E'er considered worth their keep ;
Cupboards that are cupboards still
Into cabinets can grow ;
Nothing 's altogether ill
If it was made long-ago.

Hazy glass that scarcely shines,
Tenement of by-gone beers,
Looks as made for costly wines,
Through the mist of hazy years.
Bad utensils turn to good,
Old books are no longer slow ;
Oh ! we would not, if we could,
Disbelieve in long-ago.

Though the doom of swift decay
Shocks the soles of patent boots ;
Though the seediness of age
Quickest comes on cheapest suits :

Still the boots will be forgotten,
We shall think not on the blow,
Never grieve o’er paletots rotten,
If the past be long-ago.

There are many other pieces of poetry:
together with laconics extracted from good
authors: such as—

“ In being asked for our autograph there is something gratifying to our vanity, provided it be not on the back of a bill.”

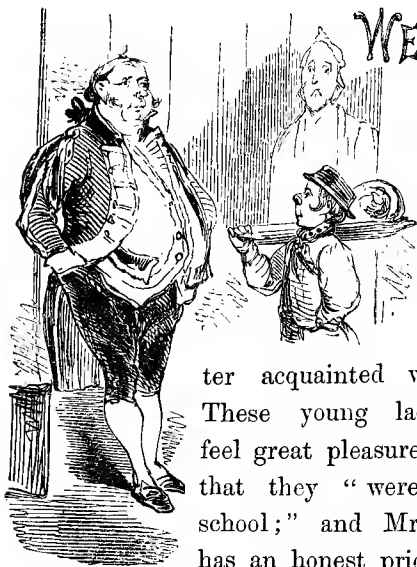
ROCHEFOUCAULT.

and similar ones. But we have been looking over the album so long that we have quite forgotten the owners, to whom we now turn our attention.



CHAPTER III.

OF THE YOUNG LADIES, AND LACQUER BENEVOLENCE IN GENERAL.



WE HAVE mentioned, *en passant*, the young lady Lacquers: we will now endeavour to make the reader bet

ter acquainted with them. These young ladies, then, feel great pleasure in stating that they "were never at school;" and Mrs. Lacquer has an honest pride in avow

ing that, thank God, her daughters were brought up at home, solely from the idea that it was the only way of producing pure-minded and well-educated young women. Those narrow-minded people who affect to sneer at Mrs. Lacquer, for that display which they can never hope to compass, affirm that there were other reasons for domestic tuition. In fact that, because when her daughters were growing up there were several more in family, it was deemed cheaper to work to death a talented and broken-hearted girl, as governess, in instructing the whole party at once, than to place them separately at some school.

So have we seen, at taverns, five people club together their shillings for the luxury of a bowl of punch, and be looked upon for a while as the heads of the room, where, otherwise they would have been compelled to be content with single measures of plebeian spirits. So do passengers in the street throw forth their

united halfpence to command the exertions of the famishing mountebank, whose performance they could not **have** commanded for themselves alone.

The governess of the young lady Lacquers taught them a useful lesson beyond the ordi-



nary routine of tuition, inculcating a proper pride of station, and the importance of money. She was far superior to them both in family and acquirements. Her father's crest had never needed to be "found" by ingenious seal-engravers of inventive minds: for she knew that her ancestors had borne it on their shields at Agincourt. But the Lacquers were enabled, through their excellent bringing-up, to look upon her merely as a superior domestic—the *entresol* in their architectural scale of society; and they regarded her with a perfect absence of that awkward feeling which would certainly have affected low people. And, of course, the mere fact of their so constantly and studiously endeavouring to make the governess perfectly aware of what she was, proved that they thought nothing of her.

The Misses Lacquer are now perfectly accomplished, masters having perfected what the governess left undone. Common French they look upon as their own tongue, bringing it in,

both in writing and speaking, wherever they can: but it is wonderful to hear them talk German—even the very natives of that country have been amazed at it. Emily has, of course, translated Burger's *Lenore*, and Bessie has illustrated it with a copy of Vernet's ghastly



picture in this manner, which is pronounced to be superior to the original. And the manner in which, when they show it, they both quote

“ Graut Liebchen auch? der Mond scheint hell!
Hurrah! die Todten reiten schnell!
Graut Liebchen auch vor Todten?”
“ Ach, nein! doch las die Todten!”

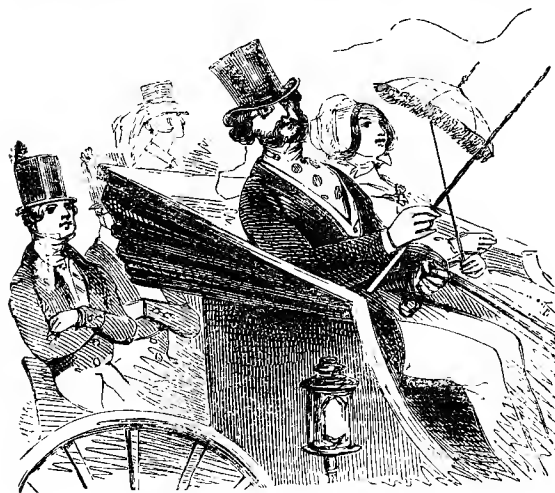
is pronounced by listeners to be truly awful.

Their knowledge of Italian is so perfect, they would not, for the world, be seen with a book at the Opera. They would as soon think of singing an English ballad in society, unless they smothered up the words and overlaid the air with roulades, so that by thus stifling the original song altogether, nobody could exactly tell what it was.

They have a great idea of the Horticultural Fête, at Chiswick, and are usually to be met with at all three; although they give it out generally that they only go to the middle one.

They feel great gratification when their carriage draws up at the gate, before the people who are waiting for their own equipages. They could get in much sooner, and far more comfortably, by walking down to where it was waiting at the side of Turnham Green; but then nobody would see its gaudy liveries and conspicuous heraldic bearings. Once they found it necessary to cut a friend of their brother's because he had the temerity, in the open face of a beautiful July day, calmly and deliberately, to go from Hyde Park Corner to Chiswick on the roof of an omnibus; and, what was worse, smile at them when he met them. But this ultra propriety does not always appear; for Bessie Lacquer does not mind being driven down through the park by the Honourable Such-a-one, of the Blues, upon his assurance to her mamma that he will take every care of her; and her mamma's assurance to him, in return, that she would not let Bessie go with anybody else;

which is remarkable, when the gallant gentleman's popular reputation is considered. To do the Lacquer girls justice, they are very handsome; just that style of effective beauty that men like to be seen with. They are of the order of girls who know the household army list by heart, and believe greatly in military men; girls, whom all agree to be glorious in a



After the Flirt has fired the first shot the revolution commences, and the reports become general. The *épergues* are stormed for fresh arms; barricades of gilt paper are thrown up; and the bonbons are compelled to abdicate somewhat suddenly, whilst a republic of merri-ment is established, and many engagements take place—but only for the next Polka. And then the Flirt begins to read very steadily the last motto that her partner has given her, which goes as follows:—

“ Que ne ferais-je pas pour obtenir de vous,
Jeune amie, un aveu, qui courannat ma flamme ?
Laissez agir mes feux, qu'ils passent dans votre ame,
Et vous éprouverez les plaisirs les plus doux.”

Having read which she laughs, and squeezes in her eyes and looks wicked, and puts it into her glove, and then she ruthlessly despoils several bonbons, examining their mottoes, and throwing

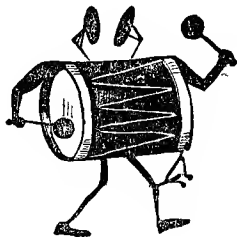
them away, until, until she finds an old favourite, and gives it to him. He reads.—

“Ni le lieu par sa distance,
Ni le temps par sa longueur,
N'auraient jamais la puissance,
De vous éloigner de mon cœur.”

And then they begin to talk to one another so earnestly, that some of the guests say, in reply to observations, “Oh! that’s an old affair between Margaret Howard and young Lincoln:” and others, less charitable, with plain families, “would be sorry to see *their* daughters make themselves so conspicuous.”

Whereas, in point of conspicuousness, the Flirt and her favourite are the least open to the charge of any in the room. And, indeed, so wrapped up are they in themselves, that it is until some little time after the last crinoline is compressed, through the young men waiting to come in, in the door-way, she perceives she is the last lady left in the room; and that the

rest are already dancing a quadrille by themselves up stairs to the universal band of the orchestrina, which, with all the stops out, must be the instrument upon which Verdi the Violent composes his operas.



CHAPTER V.



OF THE OLGA WALTZ IN ITS RELATION TO FLIRTING.

"To one and all, the lovely stranger came,
And every ball-room echoes with her name."

BYRON.



IN the commencement of a winter afternoon, we would have you picture the library of a fine old country-house. The windows overlook a river, which is swollen and turbid, making level the weir and the back-water, and gurgling

about the trunks of the skeleton trees that dart up from the leaden-coloured stream, now deep over the islets on which they grow. Guns are frequently heard, ringing in the high woods about the house, and dying in long reverberating echoes along the vale of the river; and a party of ladies are seen, through the bare shrubs of the copse, going to meet the shooters.

Nobody is at home but two individuals, in the old library. One, a lady, young and pretty, is turning over some French songs, and trying them vaguely. The other, a gentleman, thinks he is listening to them, as he never moves his eyes from her face.

Some of the songs are very pretty. There is "*Mire dans mes yeux les yeux*," and "*Toi*," and "*Je t'aime parce que je t'aime*," "*Je crois en toi*," "*Ce n'est pas ta dot*" and many others.

At last they came to "*La Folle*." Possibly you do not know that touching song. It is supposed to be sung by some poor girl who has

gone mad from love. She met the faithless one at a ball, and she is continually murmuring the tune of the Valse, during which the burning words that caused her misery were whispered in her ear. The air of the Valse is introduced all through the song, breaking in upon the accompaniment, even to the end, where, after the delirious burst of excitement in which she sings :

“ Que j’aime le plaisir, la parure et la danse;”

she falters at once to the wailing confession,

“ Que je souffre, O mon Dieu ! rien qu’en pensant à *lui* !”

The song is sung by the young lady, who is an adept in flirting, with all the effect that a mezzo-soprano voice—low and trembling—can give to it. And then they both think of the waltz they had last night, when the large room was lighted up and the neighbouring families made up such a good party—and recal what passed

CHAPTER IV

OF THE GENERAL SOCIETY MET AT THE
LACQUERS



OUR friends the Lacquers have two distinct sets of acquaintances—those whom they knew formerly in the city, and those that have been introduced to them since they set up their west-end establishment; and as these two parties do not very well harmonize,

the greatest skill and management is necessary to prevent any uncomfortable collisions. And so their assemblies are always the result of much careful arrangement, except the large balls, where, owing to the crowded state of the rooms, anybody can pass muster tolerably well, from the mercantile friends of former times, to the semi-unproducible relations of the present day, whom it is found necessary to cut dead in the park, if the Lacquers are riding with any of their high connexions. But these latter persons, being low and uncivilized, think that consanguinity is a sufficient plea for intimacy; and are always calling just when they ought not, in consequence of which attention the Lacquers give them a set dinner annually, "to keep up old feelings and natural affection," as Mr. Lacquer always says on these occasions. The period fixed for these *réunions* is generally as much out of the season as it can be, because the semi-unproducibles are always happy to

accept the invitation of the Lacquers at any time; and the early close of day veils the motley train of hack vehicles which, according to the usual habits of vulgar people, always arrive together at the door within a minute of the exact time.

Several distinguished foreigners—chiefly counts and barons—are usually met with at the Lacquers' great parties, and then the hostess addresses them in a louder tone than ordinary, and by their titles. The greater part of the company know them very well in Regent Street, or rather think they do; for most distinguished foreigners so resemble one another, that we ourselves sometimes imagine that we have seen the Lacquers' friends in the most questionable haunts in London; but this must be a mistake—such imposing specimens of alien aristocracy would never have stooped to visit the places in question. The Baron Devoidoff Witz is the

most popular of the Continentalists. He is a rollicking young cavalier of eight-and-forty, who finds much favour in the eyes of the young ladies, by giving out that he has a large fortune, and is looking after a wife ; and so he is usually



seen with one of the best girls in the room upon his arm. *Au reste*, he is harmless, which is much more than can be said of the majority of distinguished foreigners who glitter in the *parvenu* drawing-rooms of our great London. They all speak English with tolerable accuracy, but the Misses Lacquer think it good breeding to keep up a conversation with them in their own language.

After a time some of these illustrious persons disappear and are heard of no more; others re-appear rather too prominently, and are heard of a great deal too much; and others again, perhaps the majority, may be met, when the season has passed, in the secluded back settlements of the towns of Kentish and Camden—spots which find peculiar favour, as far as regards cheap rustication, in the eyes of the million unshaven foreign adventurers, who swarm over here annually for the sake of swindling their way into decent society, or

robbing poor John Bull in the impudent manner which that worthy gentleman so very quietly puts up with.

If you mention any one of these latter migratory beings, the Lacquers will always tell you that it is not the same person whom you have met at their house. Possibly not: yet with all their aristocratic bearing we have sometimes trembled for the spoons when we have narrowly watched two or three of these stars at the parties. And the Lacquers afford greater room for this fear from their tables being always loaded with plate. But this is a point of economy after all: for people are not in the habit of devouring silver forks and candle-sticks, and they cost nothing to keep when not in use: whilst with their aid a very little refreshment goes a great way. Six brandy-cherries in the branch of an *epergne* become prominent portions of the feast, when they would have been passed over in a saucer of

cheap blown glass or a pickle dish. The large vase of artificial flowers at the top—which, like the wreath of Dr. Parr's maypole, is carefully put by when the fête is over, to come out again in undiminished glory at the next—does away with the trifle by occupying its place, and looks more imposing. The small mould of cream is aggrandized by the heavy moulding of the dish on which it is placed; and throughout the whole banquet the same evidences appear of the *economy of splendour*. Indeed the endeavour to pick out something slightly substantial, reminds one of Sindbad hunting for food in the Valley of Diamonds before the merchants above threw down the legs of mutton. Equally with the Lacquers, are Greenwich and Black-wall tavern-keepers aware of the power of plated dishes in increasing the importance of the viands they contain: or three or four pieces of stewed eel would never pass muster. as they do, in the eyes of the hungry guest who

has just quitted the river—to say nothing of salmon cutlets and *filets de sole*.

The young men who frequent the Lacquers' house, keep cabs, and talk largely of their winnings at cards, and their clubs (although you cannot distinctly understand to which they belong), and the men they know in the guards. Without being regularly sporting-men, they assume a great knowledge of dogs, and horses, and the state of the odds. Young Lacquer, from associating with them, insensibly—insensibly enough—falls into their style of conversation, and speaks about “making up his book” as a matter of great moment: although it is believed by ordinary common-minded persons that a five-pound note would at any time cover his speculations, whichever way luck might turn. He is, at present, keeping his terms in the Temple: and sometimes honours those whom he considers the more eligible of his fellow-students with invitations to his house;

where, following the custom of unweaned barristers generally in after-dinner society, they differ in opinion with everybody at table for the sake of knocking up an argument: and this is kept up with great powers of contradiction, in proportion to the perfectly unimportant nature of the subject, and to the great delight and edification of the other guests. Mr Lacquer never joins much in the conversation unless it relates to money or capital; and then he appears to be so very humorous and entertaining, that his visitors are continually laughing at him. Sometimes, to be sure, a slight trip in his grammar carries back the mind of his auditor to the days of his early education, but he is not courted one whit the less upon this account. His money brings position, and position brings influence; and he enjoys the high gratification of affording room for his acquaintances to place his skull far beneath his breeches' pocket, in point of value as to what it

contains. For gold is the best joker in the world : its sallies always tell.

You will always be certain to meet at the Lacquers' a great many persons with whom you are perfectly well acquainted by sight, but to whom you can assign no fixed position in society, having generally met them in places where distinction was acquired by paying for it. You will see them sailing up the avenues of a morning concert to the reserved seats ; they cross your pathway in going to their carriages from Howell and James's ; they brush against you at the conclusion of the performances at the Opera ; and they put their faith in Gunter, firmly believing that his ice is much colder than even that of Wenham Lake—at all events it is expensive, which, placing it more out of the power of the common-place million, must of course endow it with superior attributes of some kind or another. It is this eligible class that forms the great proportion of Mrs. Lac-



quer's visiting acquaintance just at present, and the continual struggle between them all to outdo the others in display is most amusing. The feeling extends to the younger branches—especially the girls; if any of them even appear in the parks on a finer horse than their

acquaintances, the Lacquers never let their father rest until they also have one equally conspicuous: indeed Bessie will, without doubt, have an elephant before long, sooner than be outdone.



All this fighting, either in anticipating the others in some expensive novelty for the table or palate, or in the matter of dress or show-off, proves that they work harder, and experience many more cutting vexations, than the nobodies of the middling circles who do not enjoy a twentieth part of their income; but who

nevertheless contrive occasionally, to the extraordinary astonishment of Mrs. Lacquer and her friends, to get into a particular sphere of society which they, with all their dash and expenditure, are unable to accomplish.



CHAPTER V



A DINNER-PARTY AT THE LACQUERS'



HAVING introduced our readers to the Spangle Lacquers, and some of their connexions, we will now reunite them at a dinner-party

given by this superior family. Or rather we will attempt to do so; for it is difficult to write through music, and an attendant demon of annoyance is beneath our window playing the Post-horn Gallop very slowly, on an organ,

and chirping an accompaniment to it on a bird-whistle, more or less in a different key. So—he is gone to worry the neighbours at last, and we may now proceed,

Those accustomed to mix in society upon whose opinion we can rely, have decided that dinner-parties originated in remote ages from a desire on the part of the giver to collect around him those friends in whose society he felt the greatest pleasure. But time effects singular changes, and the Spangle Lacquers, at the present day, in company with many others, appear only anxious to invite those with whom they are constantly sparring for position in the vast arena of fiddle-faddle gentility; entirely forgetting also, that the social observances of the real aristocracy, however proper when confined to the class amongst whom they arose, become pitifully ludicrous in the imitations of second or third rate establishments.

A grand dinner-party at the Lacquers' is a dreary festival of ostentation; and yet the guests must think it pleasant and entertaining, or they would not come. We must confess that our own ideas of sociability are somewhat different; but it does not follow that they are right, nor would we have them considered the standard of general opinion in consequence.

As we are in the habit of seeing only one phase of life, and that an inferior one, we dined at the Lacquers' a short time ago, having first studied the *Hints upon Etiquette* for some days previously, that we might not commit ourselves by any unpolished action. Half-past six for seven was the appointed feeding-time; and about the latter hour we presented ourselves at the house, and were ushered, with due solemnity, into the drawing-room. Nobody had yet assembled beyond the family, who were all sitting, *en grande tenue*, upon the embroidered sofas and ottomans, divested for that day of

their chintz skins. The majority of the guests, however, arrived within twenty minutes of the time : and then we heard from each what singular weather it was for the time of year, and how rapidly town was filling. Mrs. Lacquer kept casting such anxious glances at the spidery hands of a large ormolu time-piece, that we saw the whole of the party had not come to their time ; and, at about a quarter to eight, Mr. and Mrs. Fitzmoses were ushered into the room, and Mrs. Spangle Lacquer told them how very happy she was to see them—which I believe, at the moment, was the case. We were much amused to hear young Lacquer tell his sister “ that the Fitzmoses were not in a position to keep people waiting so long, although they always did it.” By this we learnt a custom of which we were before ignorant—that the higher the station people acquire in life, the later they may come to a dinner-party. We have no doubt, allowing

an hour to every degree, that after twenty-four ascending ranks, supposing it brings us to a duke, his invitation is always meant to imply the same hour on the day after that for which it is given.

After much manœuvring on the part of Mrs. Lacquer to get the most eligible persons together, with proper regard to their precedence, we went down stairs in very grave procession, and finally settled into our respective places. The brilliancy of the table so dazzled us, that we have not a distinct recollection of the first ten minutes, except convulsively swallowing some white soup, which one of the servants appeared to insist upon our tasting. But when the fish was served, we began to see the triumph of form over comfort. The plates were costly, and the devices heraldic, but we could get no lobster sauce; the forks were heavy and richly chased, but the cayenne was detained at the bottom of the room by the

apparent combination of the footmen. So we ate our two inches of turbot *au naturel*, and made up with bread, pretending that we liked it best in that fashion; indeed, as a dead silence reigned over the table during the entire course, we picked our little French roll entirely to pieces, for the express purpose to appear to be doing something and not feeling uncomfortable. And we looked about the room, especially at the pictures, which were rather



remarkable for the heavy gilding of the frames, than their subjects or style. There were, of course, Mr. and Mrs. Lacquer as large as life, and two Wardour Street ancestors—one, a Charles the Second beauty, being, as

he informed us, his great-great-grandmother, which, being so, it was rather a wonder he allowed to remain in an old curiosity shop so long ; and the other was a quiet old gentleman, whom we had been told was Mrs. Lacquer's uncle, but who, somehow or another, got into the hands of a family in Surrey, at whose sale he had been recovered. Nothing is so easy to set up as ancestors : and the older the better, because then nobody can question the likeness.



But with all our endeavours to appear civilised, we sadly committed ourselves in asking for some beer—a liquid prepared from a preparation of barley, formerly drunk at dinner, during the savage state of English society. We had seen nothing about its impropriety in the *Hints upon Etiquette*, and had, therefore, ventured to ask for it—the more so, because

when we once took luncheon with the Lacquers, we saw them all drink a very fair quantity of the outlawed beverage. But when we witnessed the haggard look of the butler upon asking him for it—when we saw Mrs. Lacquer nearly fainting, and the young ladies glancing at us as if we had been the Chinese ambassador, we perceived that we had sunk beyond redemption in their esteem; and for the time, determined never to go into high society again, but enjoy our diurnal pint of stout, or half-and-half, as the case might be, at home. For there are still certain spots in London where the discarded liquid may be obtained; but these are in very low neighbourhoods, which the Lacquers never heard of.

The pageant went on in the ordinary routine of dinner-party solemnity; in which cutlets of grave expression, and patties of aristocratic demeanour, made their appearance, and vanished—there being in company, with the

generality of side-dishes, things that nobody ever thinks of taking, and which might be just as well made, for show alone. out of *papier-mâché*. Then, we should have liked a little wine, but no one asked us to take any, and we knew no one near us to ask; besides which, we had a blue glass, and an amethyst-coloured glass, and a broad shallow glass, and a tall glass, and a tumbler; all which varieties exceedingly perplexed us: and we heard afterwards that taking wine with people "had gone out of fashion," but that the servant came round and filled for you. "Out of fashion," pah! away with such twaddle. Taking wine with another person was not a very imposing ceremony, we admit; but it evinced the desire to pay attention to the party challenged, and the wish to exhibit a friendly feeling. It was simply hospitable, and so it is "out of fashion!"

When the pastry made its appearance upon table, there was a little tart, of which Mrs

and, as she plays the chords of the key she is about to luxuriate in, everybody is not perfectly silent, so she finds the music-stool is too high, or too low, or something of the kind, and the pedals appear exceedingly difficult to be found. At length, everything being still, she plays the symphony again, and then smiling at the hostess, and saying, "that she is certain she shall break down," brings out the opening note of a recitative, which makes the drops of the chandelier vibrate again, and silences a couple who are whispering all sorts of soft nothings on a *causeuse* in the back drawing-room.

We are going to hazard a passing remark. We think it bad policy for the young lady vocalists of the present day always to choose Italian music for their displays. The performance is but *pseudo-distingué* after all, for it is, perhaps, not going too far to state, that two-thirds of the fair singers are more or less ignorant of the language they are pouring from those cells of pearl and coral, (which commonplace people designate mouths,) except the knowledge derived from the Opera translations; and, in addition, they generally provoke comparison

by selecting the difficult *morceaux* of the great singers. We are not one of those patriotic folks who snarl about "patronising foreigners," with the rest of the hackneyed subjects of discontent, for we acknowledge their musical superiority; but a pretty English girl may depend upon it she never looks so attractive as when singing a pretty English ballad. Let her attempt "Casta Diva" with all due style and execution, and, of course, her hearers will admire her power of voice; let her warble "The May Queen," or "The Grecian Daughter," with the same care and expression, and they will at once fall in love with her. And however correctly she may get through the first mentioned air, the only candid impression left, is, that we have heard it much better done upon the stage.

When the young lady has concluded, and the gentle applause of the kidded palms has died away, the hostess expresses the intensity of her obligation for such a delightful treat, and says, "I am sure, Miss Mitchell, you must require some little refreshment after your exertions;" whereupon useful Mr. Ledbury, who chances to be near the

CHAPTER VI.



A DINNER-PARTY AT THE LACQUERS'

(CONTINUED.)



As the Lacquers are very fond of crowding as many expensive things upon the table as possible, in the display of

which they think society consists ; and as they look more for the dash of equipage than the brilliancy of intellect in their acquaintances, we readily anticipated what the after-dinner part of the entertainments would resemble. Everything was in the extreme of dreary splendour. The orange chips were from Gunter's—the preserves from Fortnum and Mason's—whilst the dessert service was a blaze of enamelled gold, all which being arranged in solemn state, Mrs. Lacquer thought that the great end of giving a dinner-party was obtained. There was that public profusion which, amongst the Lacquer species, always accompanies private economy—that ostentatious extravagance ever inseparable from domestic parsimony. We never see this show-off style of living, but we imagine that the servants must fare indifferently. And indeed it has been whispered to us that Mrs. Lacquer weighs out half a pound of butter every week to each of the domestics for their seven days' allow

ance; that the store-room is a perfect bastille of imprisoned grocery; and that the Misses Lacquers, who, with all their wonderful notions, take the housekeeping by turns, "give out" the small quantities of pepper, nutmeg, and other humble condiments required for the culinary purposes of the family. But this is all very proper, inasmuch as it keeps up the proper line of distinction between superiors and attendants—far more commendable than the habits of some grovelling and mean-spirited people, who allow their servants actually to feed upon the same joint as they themselves are in the habit of dining from—and even without marking off the kitchen allowance.

The ladies did not stay long at table after the dessert had been arranged. Few of them took any wine, and fewer still said a word worth attending to—nearly the whole of their conversation being confined to fiddle-faddle remarks of the most inane description. Several times,

indeed, there was a dead silence—one of those miserable pauses which are always prolonged by the wish to think of some common-place observation that might break it, and which never comes to your relief when it is most wanted. But, pause or not, Mrs. Lacquer still sat in all the pride of pomp at the head of the table, thinking that she had done quite enough towards honouring her guest, by putting on her emerald velvet dress and point lace, and covering the table with a costly dessert. At last, after a longer pause than ordinary, she collected all the glances of the ladies' eyes into one focus, which was herself; and then, by some peculiar freemasonry, they all rose at once, and sailed out of the room—an active gentleman in a white cravat opening the door for them; and two of the ladies who went out wound their arms around one another's waists in an impulse of girlish affection, most refreshing and

delightful to behold—they could neither of them ever expect to see thirty again.



Mr. Lacquer now moved to the head of the table, and directed his guests to draw up nearer to him, which they did, apparently for the purpose of hearing him relate the history of every separate bottle of wine that came to table, each of which, by his account, was a kind not to be met with every day, but especially procured for him by his friend Logwood, at a great price, with the assurance that he was the only man who could have obtained it. Then the young gentleman, who opened the door, addressed a remark to us concerning some *fracas* in the Jockey Club; but finding we knew nothing about it, passed us over with a glance of contempt, and directly turned his attention to young Lacquer, who, mixing in better society than ourselves, was quite up to all the chicanery of the turf. And next young Lacquer told him, in confidence, of a sweet mare that he tried the other day; and only differed with the owner about a five-pound note, or he should have pur-

chased her. And then they finally agreed to drive a break along the Edgeware Road the next day, along with some man who knew Paul Bedford, and had got one of Mademoiselle Caroline's gloves which she had given to him herself at Vauxhall; and which lay in state at his rooms every day for fellows to come



and admire and envy. Two or three other guests were hard at work upon Sir Robert Peel and Lord George Bentinck; and one sharp-faced old gentleman was regarding everybody as they spoke with an air of smiling acquiescence and intent interest, that convinced us he was an humble acquaintance, asked at three-quarters past the eleventh hour, to fill up a vacancy, and balance the order of the table. And we were the more certain of this, because at dinner, whenever he was asked which particular portion of any dish he had a fancy to, he always replied, "Any part, any part, thank you; I have no preference—whichever you please." Whenever the conversation came to a standstill, Mr. Lacquer leant back in his chair, jingled his gold in his breeches' pocket, danced his heavy watch-seals in his hand, and asked if any of his friends knew of an eligible investment for fourteen thousand pounds, which he had to spare at present. And if no one responded to this in-

quity, and the silence continued, he told somebody to take a clean glass and try the claret, which he could recommend as something rather out of the common way ; or asked if Burgundy would be preferable, because he had some in his cellar, and would send for it if required

And in this manner two or three tedious hours wore away, until we were summoned, for the third time, to coffee ; when we gladly walked up stairs, even with the slight promise of entertainment which the drawing-room afforded ; contrasting, in our own mind, the dismal sociability we had just witnessed, in spite of the pineapple and chrystallized apricots, with the kindheartedness and sparkling conversation which are never to be met with higher than a couple of plain decanters with port and sherry, and some simple English walnuts (or a few filberts—we especially cling to filberts), and some crisp, toothsome biscuits

A little formal amusement took place when

we had finished our coffee. The Misses Lacquer played a piece of four-and-twenty pages in



length, for the piano and harp, which threw everybody into ecstasies except ourselves, and

afterwards sang *Giorno d'Orrore*, from *Semiramide*, to prove their versatility of talent. The rest of the company sat still and admired, or looked at albums and picturesque annuals—those harbours of refuge for the unamused—which they had seen an hundred times before, until their carriages were ordered, when they disappeared as quietly and imperceptibly as a gradual thaw, with about the same degree of coldness, being but a few degrees above freezing.

As this appeared to be the general style of entertainment which they provided for each other, we were not surprised to hear one or two of the guests express their obligations to Mrs Lacquer for their very pleasant party: but as our own feelings were quite different, we said no such thing, making our escape with much joy, and inwardly resolving to “regret that a previous engagement prevented us from accepting Mrs. Spangle Lacquer’s polite invitation,” should that lady again honour us with one.

CHAPTER VII.



A FANCY-FAIR

CHARITY



IT is said,
covereth a
multitude of
sins ; and
when she
does so with
a veil of
costly manu-
facture, how
ever delicate
and trans-
parent its
texture, the
concealment
is much more

effectual than if it were a tarpaulin of the coarsest sackcloth. The Lacquers are perfectly aware of this, and consequently are never backward in eleemosynary offerings, provided always that the object be a fashionable one, approved of by their set; and that their liberality be not hidden under a bushel, but placarded in great thoroughfares, and proclaimed to the world by the speaking-trumpet of ostentation.

Some little time back, in consequence of embarrassed funds, the patronesses of the "Ladies-babies'-bib-and-tucker-general-loan-association" determined upon holding a fancy-fair for the benefit of the institution; and were fortunate enough not only to secure the approving countenance of the Dowager Lady Floss for the undertaking, but also to get a sermon preached in its favour by a pet parson at a fashionable church. Our acquaintances were amongst the first applied to for their support, which Mrs. Lacquer cheerfully promised,

saying, "that there was no labour in the world more gratifying than that of alleviating the distresses of our fellow-creatures; and that this had been her principal aim in giving her daughters the first education money could furnish." And then the patronesses of the association went away rejoicing, and proclaimed everywhere what kind and benevolent people the Lacquers were. But we ourselves had always been accustomed to look upon Mrs. Spangle Lacquer as a gaudy French clock, with very inferior works, which might be seen through the glass sides; and when we regarded the inward springs that set the motives of her life in action, we found out, that unless there had been a chance of her daughters' keeping a stall, or having their productions lauded and chronicled in the columns of a fashionable journal, the "Ladies'-babies'-bib-and-tucker-general-loan-association" might have fallen to the ground with the greatest pleasure in the world

on the part of Mrs. Lacquer. But the fair was expected to be fashionably attended—fashionable families gave it their countenance—the very circumstance of young aristocratic ladies lowering themselves to trade, and playing at shop-girls, was fashionable—and very fashionable company were to be admitted the first day at half-a-crown a piece for the mere privilege of entrance. But that the noble objects of the institution might be universal, and all allowed to contribute to their furtherance common people were allowed to pay a shilling, and come in on the last day, when some of the articles began to hang on hand, and the more select visitors had picked out what goods most captivated their fancy. What a blessed and single-hearted feeling is the charity which manifests itself so openly at fancy-fairs, and allows every one to exercise his benevolence !

The Lacquers immediately set to work and

made all sorts of fancy articles ; and what they did not make, they bought at the bazaars, and sent in under their names, which answered the purpose just as well. First of all, as they had been taught drawing, they produced an immense quantity of fire-screens, adorned with sketches of what appeared to be aristocratic periwinkle and whelk shells, reposing on shreds of pink and blue bird's-eye tobacco, intended, in the luxuriance of their imaginations, for seaweed ; over which were hovering various unknown butterflies, with tinsel wings, most appropriately introduced—the butterfly being, as everybody is aware, a marine insect that resides at the bottom of the sea. Then their grocer was ordered to send them various grape-jars, painted green, and furnished with gilt knobs ; and having bought a piece of gaudy chintz at a leading upholsterers, they cut out all the birds and flowers imprinted thereon, and stuck them on the jars, which were subsequently varnished,

and called "Macao Vases." Mrs. Lacquer was not very great in drawing or painting, but she bought bundles of short straws at her bonnet-maker's, and fixing them in circular frames of pasteboard, twisted blue ribbon in and out, making them resemble Lilliputian hurdles; and when the apparatus was complete, it was termed a spill-case, to be sold, with similar ones, at a guinea the pair. And next a quantity of trays of white wood, together with card-cases, envelope-boxes, glove-containers, and many other contrivances of the same material, were laid in from the fashionable stationer's. These were intended to be adorned with the transfer-work; and then what havoc began! Innumerable lithographs were immolated—all the table-covers in the house were varnished, more or less; and the bottles were broken, and corks left out, and contents all evaporated or dried. And the Misses Lacquer themselves, for an entire week, had such very sticky fingers,

that the young men of fashion who had the *entrée* of the house, and came to talk captivating nothings to the ladies, or hold their skeins of



silk whilst they were engaged in their fancy manufactures, declared that shaking hands with them was one of the most delightful sensations

which they—the young men of fashion—had experienced for some time. They were fairly detained for a minute in the thrilling and adhesive grasp of the young ladies.

The Misses Lacquer did not do a great deal in the Berlin-wool line—they pronounced it worn-out, and too much followed by common people to create any more sensation. Possibly they might have thought that it was a great deal of trouble with a very little effect—but this by the way. But they performed some very curious feats of sleight of hand, with a pack of perforated cards, torturing them into sticking-plaster cases, and what-nots ; and when their ingenuity could devise no fresh shape to stitch them into, they turned their attention to the perforations themselves, and pushed needles, followed by trains of coloured floss silk, through the little round holes, which they termed embroidering them.

At last their wares were completed, and

sent in, to the great exultation of Mrs. Lacquer and equal admiration of the lady-committee, who unanimously declared that the Misses Lacquers' stall would be the most attractive, and confer the greatest benefit upon the treasury of the association—whose sole end was charity. But those good Christians never gave a thought to the number of consumptive heart-broken girls who were struggling for a slender livelihood—in many cases to support others besides themselves—by manufacturing the very same kind of things offered at the fancy-fair, with the exception of their being better made and much cheaper than the amateur articles. Or it they did once think about it, the only feeling was in all probability one of vanity, in being able to compete with regular manufacturers, without having been brought up to labour. And of course the Honourable Kensington Pump would sooner wear a pair of gaudy braces painted upon velvet by the fair



hands of Miss Lacquer herself, and exhibit them at water-parties, or other occasions on which he had to take off his coat in public,

than a pair of the same kind ornamented by nobody knew who, and bought at a bazaar. How could any one expect it would be otherwise ; although a bewitching smile of thanks was all the change he got for his five-pound note ? And young Fitzmoses also, who had all the inclination and none of the ability to become a man about town, did not at all grumble at buying a guinea pen-wiper for the purposes of charity ; it was such a rare chance, also, to get the opportunity of "chaffing" the refined daughters of the west end, whilst making the purchase, just as if they had been common stall-keepers at the counters of the Pantheon or Soho Bazaar. This was very pleasant and agreeable to all parties, heightened by the good they felt they were doing in a benevolent point of view. It was impossible to benefit everybody, and although every article that was sold took a crust from the board of some industrious female artist, yet it swelled the treasury of the

"Ladies'-babies'-bib-and-tucker-general-loan-association," and the various young ladies who kept the stalls were so much delighted with the public exhibition of their own wares and attractions—so gratified at the compliments paid to both by the gentlemen purchasers—including even the officers who had so liberally allowed the band of their regiment to play upon the occasion ; but who, however, did not buy a great many things—that they almost hoped the funds of the society would get into an embarrassed state once more, that they might again have the pleasure of assisting them

And, finally, Mrs. Lacquer and her daughters, when all was over, and they had received the especial thanks of the committee for their exertions, agreed there were many social virtues to be exercised by all right-thinking and religious people, but that the greatest of these was Charity.

CHAPTER VIII.



MRS SPANGLE LACQUER'S COUNTRY
CONNEXION.



SISTER of Mrs. Lacquer's married a gentleman of property, and resides in the country. Her name is Mrs. ChampignonStiffback, which betrays the foreign origin of her hus-

bard, although he is himself an Englishman.

They are tolerable specimens of high rural gentility.

The Stiffbacks reside in a village about two or three miles from a country town, which they make their metropolis. They visit London occasionally during the season, when they usually stay with the Lacquers, and pick up a few fresh notions to astonish the rustics. But beyond this they are not very fond of town. They perceive they are not there of sufficient importance, and they prefer being the storks amongst an assembly of rural frogs, to the unheeded nobodies of a great city. Not, however, that they are always perfectly at their ease in the country; for their position is somewhat uncomfortably poised between the real county aristocracy and the petty agricultural gentilities, belonging to neither, and occasionally looked shy at by both. And since they are in perpetual fear of losing *caste* in the frigid respectability of these dis-

tricts, by an unlucky acquaintance or an unfortunate slight, their existence is a continuous scene of anxious manœuvring and *finesse*; making strict search into the origin and position of all people taking houses in their vicinity, whom they hang off from calling upon, until they have ascertained who and what their new neighbours are. And in country visiting, it is absolutely necessary to find out all those ladies and gentlemen who do not meet each other, either from natural antipathy, touchy disposition, or fancied difference of rank; by means of which knowledge alone rural dinner-parties can be satisfactorily arranged, to the equal comfort of the host or hostess and their visitors, who would otherwise be obliged to sit looking at each other, like fighting cats, across the table. And this cautious manner of proceeding gives an impetus to country visiting, instead of restraining it. For example, the A.'s have a party, and ask the B.'s and C.'s. The B.'s next invite the other

two families, and then the C.'s ask the A.'s and B.'s in company with the D.'s. And finally, the last-named persons return the hospitality of the C.'s., excluding, of course, the others; but asking the E.'s and F.'s in their places, to show that they can command quite as good a circle of society.

As with their relatives in town, the Stiff-backs made religion the principal medium for exhibiting their gentility to the eyes of the world. But it is obliged to be managed in a different manner, since in a country village there is no fashionable church wherein to blazon forth plumes and cachmeres to a patrician audience—for audience is in this case a far more natural word than congregation. The humble fane receives alike the peasant and the aristocrat; and the preacher must make his discourse equally intelligible to both, instead of seeking by theatrical declamation and high-flown language to secure the affections of the

higher class alone—the chief object of the London Pet Parson. And so, as distinction is not to be obtained by attending church, the Stiffbacks belong to what is termed a "District Society," for visiting the poor at their own houses. This is not for the purpose of distributing beef and blankets to the hungry and naked, but for the far more laudable design of consoling the sick and starving with a tract, which they are requested to read, keep clean,



and then return. And conjoined to this society Mrs. Stiffback, in company with some other ladies, has established a private Sunday-school, wherein some fifteen or twenty fidgety children study "Reading made Uneasy" in a hot, ill-ventilated room on fine summer afternoons, and sing hymns that would drive even Hullah mad—in which they evince their gratitude to their benefactors by frequent yawns and shuffles, and longing glances at the waving trees and green pastures about the school-house. The ladies take it in turns to become governesses, and all appear to find great delight in the occupation, except Mrs. Heartly, who was profane enough one afternoon to give all the children tea and cake, instead of affording the usual hebdomadal aliment to their minds—a proceeding which drew down upon her the indignation of every pious and well-regulated individual in the village, including, of course, Mrs. Stiffback at the head of them, until she

found that Mrs. Heartly was on visiting terms in London with Mrs. Spangle Lacquer—of whom the Stiffbacks think a great deal—when she immediately pronounced it a very charitable and thoughtful benefaction.

Indeed, it was at Mrs. Heartly's instance alone that Mrs. Stiff back refrained from paying a visit to Widow Hopkins, whither she intended to go and lecture the poor woman upon the impropriety of her allowing her children to have the measles, and actually staying away from church one Sunday to attend upon them, when the infant was also taken ill. Not, however, that Mrs. Stiff back felt much affection for Mrs. Heartly in reality, nor did any of her friends; for whilst they themselves were in the habit of dressing more expensively than others in the village—in fact, visited London, almost expressly for the purpose of bringing down the newest fashions—still the Heartlys were upon most intimate terms with many of the county fami-

lies, who only received Mrs. Stiffback and her party with the formality of cold politeness. And this was the more remarkable, because although the Heartlys were really well-born, yet their income was somewhat limited; and both mother and daughters went about in common whittles and straw-bonnets, which Mrs. Stiffback would scarcely have allowed her nursery-maid to wear—certainly not her governess. But after all, the Heartlys were very peculiar in their habits.

Mr. Stiffback may be briefly described as one of that large body of *parvenus* who have lost the civility of the tradesman, without acquiring the manners of the gentleman. He walks about the village as if every pebble and blade of grass was under subjection to him, and is courteous to no one—being pompous even to his equals, and taking no notice of his superiors—possibly for the simple reason that they are not particularly attentive to him. He

makes the village coach take him round to his own door—why, it is difficult to determine, for he pays no more than anybody else ; but he thinks this gives him consequence, and so he enforces it.

Independent of those in that sphere of visiting which they are pleased to term their own, the Stiffbacks court the professional society of the village. The clergyman of course comes first ; and he is at all times most polite to his entertainers, because they always head the coal and missionary subscriptions, and are indefatigable in collecting penny-pieces for the conversion of anonymous savages living in unknown islands. Besides, Mr. Stiffback had the weathercock of the church re-gilt at his own expense. Then comes the medical man, and then the lawyer. This last gentleman believes himself to be the link between the upper and lower orders in the neighbourhood ; but as his clients contain some of either class, he is ne-

cessarily obliged to be polite to both, and give occasional dinners; but these dinners are always in sets of graduated distinction. And although he sometimes appears to slight his less important connexions, yet they do not take much notice of it; for they are aware that he goes into better society than they do—that if they offended him the others would still receive him; and so, for the sake of scratching together a little important society, they pocket all sorts of affronts, which would be revenged upon an equal or inferior with unmitigated severity.



CHAPTER IX.



“THE LATEST INTELLIGENCE.”



FOR A long time we saw very little of the Lacquers, or any of their connexions—principally because we did not care to pay any extra-attention to a set of people who had so few feelings in common with ourselves. We are perfectly aware that the heart, even in its proper state, is simply

a hollow muscle; but this organ, in all the Lacquer family, was so very cavernous, that it almost resembled a human drum, making a loud, empty noise to the world from its very hollowness, but destitute of any sympathy with its fellows.

Now and then, however, we saw the name of "Spangle Lacquer, Esq." amongst the advertised directors of some new Improvident Assurance Society, or in a file of aristocratic subscriptions. Then the fashionable newspapers contrived occasionally to make a paid paragraph look as unlike an advertisement as possible, in heralding forth the description of a *fête* or *soirée* given by the lady; and after that we heard vague reports that one of the daughters was about to marry a foreign nobleman—Count or Baron Somebody or another, whom we had seen flitting about Hanway Yard and Regent Street. Like his compatriot *flâneurs*, he was of seedy appearance, and always awakened a wish in you, to shave him, cut his hair, and plunge him into



a warm bath. Indeed, we once saw his attention fixed at a placard outside a fur-shop in one of the thoroughfares just named ; and when we read the announcement of "*Foreign skins cleaned here.*" we thought what great advantages the

establishment could offer to many of the Continentalists who crowd our pavements.

Subsequently the match was off; and people said he behaved very badly. For our own part, we think his conduct was strictly honourable; inasmuch as when he heard that the father lived up to his income, and did not mean to give his daughters anything until he died, the foreign nobleman with a fine sense of feeling declined dragging Miss Lacquer into a state of poverty—his own property being curiously minute and worthy of forming an interesting object for the oxyhydrogen microscope at the Polytechnic Institution.

As regarded both the young ladies, affairs were beginning to get desperate, and the usual round of expensive marine boarding-houses was recommended. Here they commenced their attacks upon all the corpulent bachelors with curled hair—the wild young celibataires of five-and-forty, who flourish at those matrimonial

exchanges every autumn—but their success was not equivalent to their efforts. After this they tried what the Opera would do, reckoning upon



the visits of any eligible young men they might know in the house to their box. But when the young men came, they were always more intent upon what the Lacquer girls called "those impudent dancers," than attentive to the young ladies ; so this plan was a failure. And finally, disgusted at the want of taste shown by their countrymen, they persuaded the heads of their family to go to Paris, where we again met them, living in the most expensive hotel of the dearest *quartier*, and feeling great pleasure in paying twice as much as they ought for everything they purchased, to the great benefit of poor folks like ourselves who came after them. They stopped at Paris some little time, and then went to Switzerland and Italy. Afterwards, somebody met them on the Rhine, and at last they returned back to England, laden with cart loads of more alabaster ornaments, German glasses, and wonderful productions from every place they had visited, which, we imagine, must convert

their already crowded drawing-rooms into a species of private bazaar. They could have purchased all these things at an equally cheap rate in England, including duty and carriage, but then the chance would have been lost of saying, "We brought that from Florence," or, "When we were at Vienna," and the like speeches. Young Lacquer, whose continental gatherings were confined to an enormous pipe, and some foreign jewellery, was himself always talking of them. The last time we met him, we believe that we offended him beyond reconciliation. He was, as usual, descanting upon his Geneva watch, his Venetian rings, his Florentine mosaic broach, and other articles, when we exhibited a knife which we had purchased at Wolverhampton: and added, after he had announced his intention of visiting Greece next year, that we thought ourselves of spending the summer at Birmingham. He never took any notice of us again, and since then, we have



ceased to visit the family. Our ideas are far too low and common for the refined circles we should meet at their house.

CHAPTER X.

WHICH IS BRIEFLY CONCLUSIVE



HAVING thus introduced the Spangle Lacquers to your notice, we are going to bid them farewell. Possibly you may some day come across them. They form but one specimen of a class comprising thousands, who appear to think that money alone is necessary to

attain distinction in the great world ; and that an almost slavish compliance with the most fiddle-faddle conventions of fashion can alone ensure to them an eligible station in society.

We admit with sorrow that the prototypes of the Spangle Lacquers form the greater portion of the middling circles ; and we have endeavoured in the preceding sketches, if they were too blinded by their own lustre to see it themselves, at all events to show to others the hollow motives which rule so many of our acquaintances in their social ceremonies. And we fear all this will continue until people visit only those whom they really have a regard for, unbiased by show-off interest, or, though last not least, the fear of what other people think. When parties shall be given for the sake of collecting together esteemed friends, instead of displaying plate and crockery, this change will be effected ; but until then, the empty pomp of society towards those whom it affects to honour, will exhibit the same aspect of dreary ostentation as the stand of feathers which the undertaker carries on his head like a tray of pies, does to the corpse it is intended to dignify. For, as we have shown—taking one

entertainment as a specimen of the rest—a stuck-up dinner-party is one of the most melancholy examples we can offer of the feudal service by which the givers hold their *caste* in society. Hospitality, which ought to be the primary cause, is triumphed over by jealousy or ostentation. The whole entertainment is an unmitigated series of attempts at rivalry and display: there is a mute eloquence in every cover and claret-jug upon the table, which seems to say, “See in what style we do things here, compared to your own establishment!” The premature and sickly vegetables,—perfectly out of season, but forced and introduced solely for the gratification of the pleasures of the purse and pocket of the host, rather than the palates of the guests,—merely remind us of the money in the Eastern tale which turned into leaves; whilst the dreary conversation and attempt at *badinage* which pass about the table, in the constrained style of a horse in

a curb and kicking-strap, with a clog at his heels, have something in them peculiarly distressing. True it is, that after dinner the dialogue becomes somewhat more animated; but then it is the forced excitement of the decanters which effects this change; and the pleasure derived from it is far different to that we experience from the unrestrained conversation of those real acquaintance who are as warm and animated over a boiled leg of mutton and turnips, as they would be if treated with venison and French beans at Christmas.



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